

THE SONG OF
SURRENDER
HENRY BRUCE

F 823
B 91 S

TO THE READER

KINDLY use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized.

AMARSINGH COLLEGE



Checked
10/10/20

Library

Class No. F 823

Book No. B91S'

Acc. No. 8849

Checked
8/1
AN

577

511



THE LATEST 6s. NOVELS

SPECIAL COLONIAL EDITIONS ARE ALSO PUBLISHED

THE SONG OF SURRENDER. By HENRY BRUCE, Author of "The Eurasian," "The Residency," etc.

THE WIZARD OF THE TURF. By NAT GOULD, the Author whose sales to date exceed NINE MILLION copies.

THE COURTS OF LOVE. By FARREN LE BRETON. Author of "Fruits of Pleasure," "Hoya," etc.

THE DREAM FRIEND. By V. GOLDIE, Author of "Nigel Thomson," "Marjorie Stevens," etc.

THE DESPOT. By ELLEN ADA SMITH, Author of "The Price of Conquest," "The Busybody," etc.

THE DRIVING FORCE. By GEORGE ACORN, Author of "One of the Multitude," etc.

LORD QUARE'S VISITOR. By FLORENCE WARDEN, Author of "Why She Left Him," "The Matheson Money," etc.

COMING OF AGE. By RICHARD MARSH, Author of "The Garden of Mystery," etc.

MAIDS OF SALEM. By K. L. MONTGOMERY, Author of "The Gate-Openers," "The Cardinal's Pawn," etc.

THE GREATNESS OF JOHN. By FLORENCE ANGELO (a New Author). A clever tale of Anglo-Indian Life by an author long resident in India.

THE DICE OF LOVE. By EDMUND BOSANQUET, Author of "A Society Mother," "Mary's Marriage," etc.

THE WOMAN RUTH. By CURTIS YORKE, Author of "Irresponsible Kitty," "Delphine," etc.

BLESSINGTON'S FOLLY. By THEODORE C. ROBERTS, Author of "Love on Smoky River," etc.

AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE. By VIOLET TWEEDALE, Author of "The House of the Other World," etc.

THE SNAKE GARDEN. By AMY J. BAKER, Author of "I Too have Known," "The Impenitent Prayer," etc.

THE BARBARIANS. By JAMES BLYTH, Author of "Rubina," "Amazement," etc.

THE SECRET CALLING. By OLIVIA RAMSEY, Author of "Calista in Revolt," etc.

THE MORMON LION. By DAVID FORD (a New Author). A powerful story of true love and steadfast courage of the days when polygamy was rampant in Utah.

THEIR MONTH. By NITA CLAREMONT (a New Author). The story of an indiscretion by an impulsive woman who acts rather from want of thought than from want of heart.

THE HEART OF JOANNA. By ROBERT A. HAMBLIN (a New Author). A story which, by its humour, its pathos, and its unswerving fidelity to the facts of life, will appeal to all lovers of good fiction.

JOHN LONG, LTD., PUBLISHERS, LONDON

The Song of Surrender

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Eurasian

Crown 8vo., 6s.

The Times.—"A thoughtfully written and even moving study of Eurasian character. . . . The other characters are all well drawn. . . . Mr. Bruce's whole treatment of his subject shows much insight and deserves attention."

The Spectator.—"A noteworthy book. A sincere attempt, by one who has observed closely, to give, in the words quoted in his preface, 'a just view of a Sport of Nature.' It shows a quite remarkable power of appreciating the native's point of view."

Morning Post.—"This book ought to be read by all who have not studied one of the vital problems of our Indian Empire. The author touches many phases of life in all classes, and presents all in an interesting and impartial manner."

The Residency

Crown 8vo., 6s.

The Times.—"The descriptions of palace life are written with understanding. The book contains excellent sketches of station society, especially the account of a dinner party at which Laura learns her origin."

Sunday Times.—"In *The Eurasian* Mr. Bruce proved not merely that he knew intimately well the minutiae of native and Anglo-Indian life, but that he possessed many good gifts as a novelist, understanding of English and Indian character, a telling style and the capacity to tell a moving and interesting story. *The Residency* does not fall short of its predecessor in any of these particulars; in fact it is the better written of the two."

Pall Mall Gazette.—"A capable sketch of official life in India, and a good, readable story. Mr. Bruce knows his India well, and provides a well-painted picture, with unspared colour, of life and love in India."

John Long, Limited, London

1.88 81

The Song of Surrender

An Indian Novel

By

Henry Bruce

Author of "The Residency," "The Eurasian," etc.



London

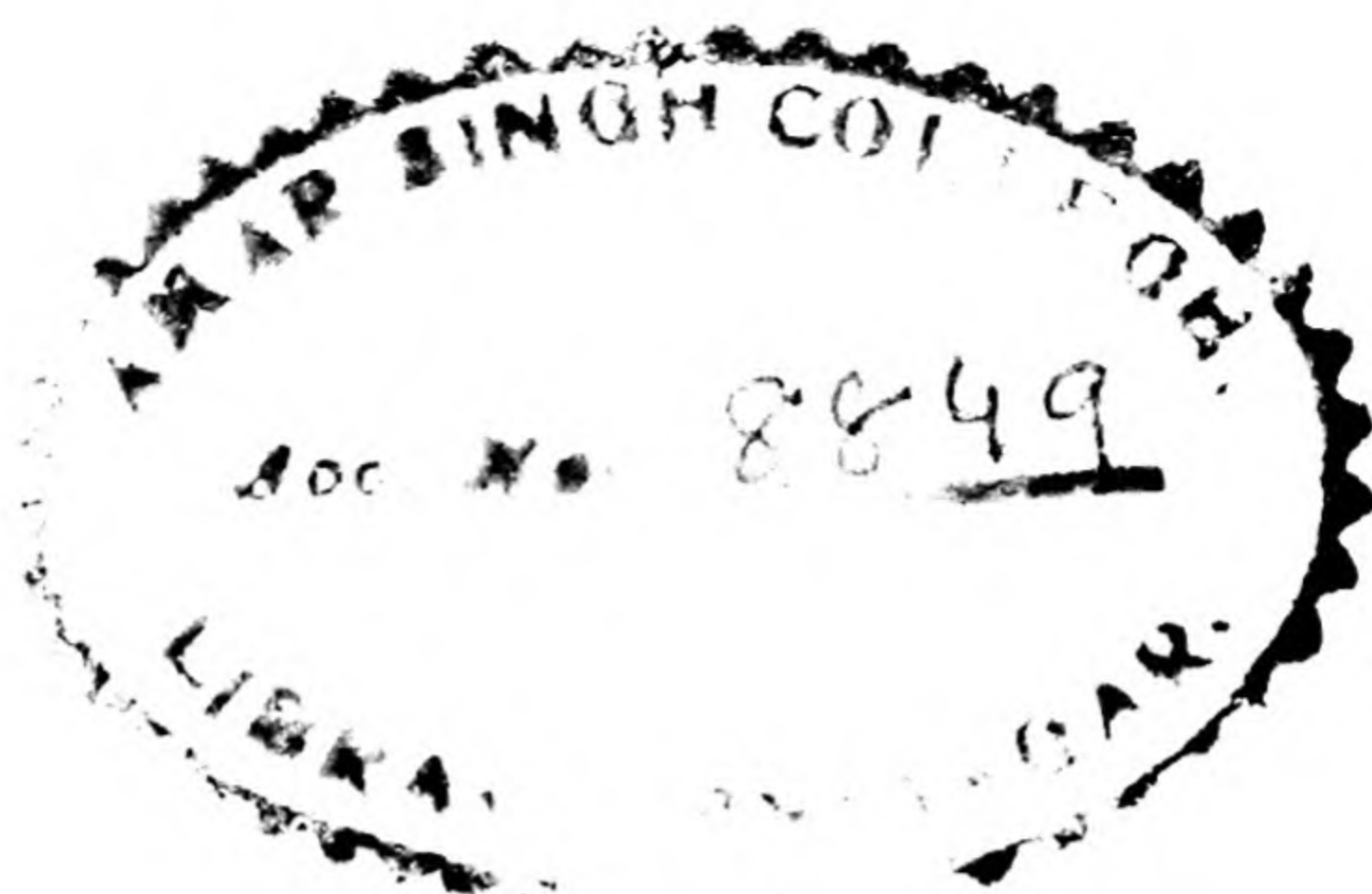
John Long, Limited

Norris Street, Haymarket

[*All Rights Reserved*]

First Published in 1915

To
My Sister
LILLIAN



A sinner of really striking style
We can only meet nowadays once in a while.
It needs more than merely to tramp in the mire ;
A sin is compounded of keenness and fire.

BRAND—*Roberts's Translation.*

F823
B91S

Cal
line
30-5-36

Contents

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE RESIDENCY	11
II. THE STRANGER	24
III. THE SERVANTS' LINES	29
IV. THE RACE	41
V. THE SURRENDER	61
VI. DEEP AS A SOUP PLATE	67
VII. THE MAHARANI SITARA	84
VIII. THE SWIMMING BATH	92
IX. A COUNTRY-BRED FAMILY	98
X. IN PRAISE OF SNOBBERY	113
XI. RAGHOBH THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER	131
XII. PAYING CALLS	148
XIII. THE GAMEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER	164
XIV. THE STRICKEN RESIDENT	171
XV. THE PRIME MINISTER	188
XVI. FROM A TOWER	199
XVII. A LINK OF EMPIRE	211
XVIII. FOUL PLAY	223
XIX. MAHABLESHWAR	238
XX. A LABOUR M.P.	252
XXI. TIGER ! TIGER !	260
XXII. THE FIRE FESTIVAL	271
XXIII. POONA	282
XXIV. GASPAR AGAIN	299
XXV. THE MAHARAJA	309
XXVI. QUIBRA	316

The Song of Surrender

CHAPTER I

THE RESIDENCY

It was a little past eight o'clock, on a hot season morning, in the grounds of the Kanhala Residency.

This faced to the north, as it has always been desirable to have houses face in India, so as to secure the utmost possible shade. It stood hardly back from an airy bluff, overlooking the wide bed, and the dwindled stream, of the sacred river Krishna, which here flows from west to east. Deep verandas, with balconies overhead, ran around each side of the building, save on the sun-blighted south.

At this hour the shade was naturally deepest on the west; though even here it was beginning to draw in. The veranda on this side was commonly used for the *chota hazri*, the Indian early breakfast. On a small table were still visible the remains of a fair meal.

The porch at the entrance, and the gravelled space beyond, were almost crowded. In the place of precedence, drawn up before the few shallow stone steps, and ready to depart, was a negatively correct car. In the second line, irregularly grouped, but in perfect silence, were more horsemen, and led horses, than the eye could correctly take in at the first glance.

To be exact, the horses numbered one dozen. There were three native grooms on horseback; and three riderless horses held by other grooms. Then there were half a dozen troopers from the Kanhala State

Cavalry, which was a rather smart force. The men of the escort sat, like somewhat baggy statues, upon horses of a creditable size for a Maratha State, where there is a strong temptation to decline to the wiry ponies of the land. Each man held proudly aloft, on a slender staff, supported by a rest, a pennon of scarlet—a miniature of the unique emblem of the State.

Finally, within the front veranda, but still in the second line, on the side away from the exit, two gentlemen stood conversing in low tones. One of these was brown, and the other white; but the brown man was evidently the master. He was in riding costume, based upon the khaki uniform of Kanhala State, with its red facings. Only a cotton cap shaded the handsome brow, from which sometimes flashed the light of diamonds, or of emeralds a finger long; yet he looked finished. The classic features were complacent; the black eyes, from beneath the long lashes, looked forth without menace upon a world which seemed to be again in tune. Switching one trouser-leg with his hunting crop, a gesture imitated by his companion, he stood there in the triumph of physique, of position, of love, a light-weight athlete, aged thirty-three.

Even little city clerks were familiar with the name and the face of the Prince of Kanhala, as they loosely called him. Of his real position they could not dream; but they betted shillings which they could ill spare upon the success of his yachts in the Solent. For this was Raja Sir Amar Rao, Kt., K.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., lately, during many years, Regent of Kanhala, and still a power, possibly the greatest power, in the kingdom which, worse luck, belonged to his soft-headed and much older brother, the Maharaja.

Amar Rao's companion was a man of forty, with the Oxford voice, and a smooth-shaven, jolly face. Though dressed for riding, he showed a carefully clerical cut about the neck. This was the prince's former tutor, William Walden, a man of social and of scholarly

charm, who had taught him such excellent English, with the cultured outlook upon life ; and who still, at increasing intervals, spent a morning hour or two in reading Greek with him. Walden had never left Amar Rao's service, where he knew how to make himself always desired. But of late the good man felt greater distances separating him from the millionaire prince, of such versatile interests, who had once been his docile and affectionately remembered pupil ; he had to scramble to keep within sight of him now.

The blue and gold of the morning had passed into an indiscriminate coppery glare. Yet many of the pleasant colours and sounds of India surrounded those grouped before the Residency. The vividly red streamers of Amar Rao's khaki escort flashed against the young green of trees which renew their foliage in the hottest season of the year. The bright tints of India's scentless flowers and songless birds counted in the scene. The cawing of the misbegotten crow is something that one may not hope to escape in India. But here it was more than balanced by an entirely Indian delight. For those who listened could hear, from behind the servants' premises, hundreds of yards away, the creaking of the woodwork of the *mot*, the apparatus for raising water from the great Residency well, could even make out, at intervals of some minutes, the delicious rush and swirl of the water foaming into the channels from the huge leather bags.

Little breezes, not cool, yet refreshing, went about, as always in the upland Maratha country.

From within the house, another group appeared upon the threshold of the front veranda.

A plump young woman, very fair, with a disturbed countenance, quivering lips, and eyes which were like cornflowers under dew. Tawny, quite reddish and luxuriant brown hair was done up tightly in a chignon at the back of her comely head. These colours contrasted effectively with that of her habit, of a tint a good deal brighter than navy blue. She, too, came out

14 The Song of Surrender

holding a riding whip, which dropped from her hand in her emotion.

Close behind her there was just a glimpse of a troubled, a tragic figure that seemed to moan and protest.

"Uncle, dear unky," she cried, rushing back and embracing this figure, but at the same time pushing it out of sight. "Do not take on so. Be kind, be reasonable. Yet, if you cannot bear to have me leave you, I will give up my morning ride so as to stay with you."

Meanwhile there had pushed her way through the front door a demure brown young woman with a bouncing figure. She was dressed in the white *sari* which betokens domestic service; and, from the lack of any caste mark on her brow, was probably a native Christian. This was Radhabai, the Residency ayah. Standing now on the veranda, too close to her betters, she gazed about her, and at the group outside, with a curiously, an indefinably, proprietorial air.

Hanging prettily at Radhabai's skirts was her sweet little Eurasian daughter of eight or nine, Ruth, not white, yet much lighter than her mother. In contrast to her mother's simple garment, Ruth was arrayed, evidently by a loving hand, in a little silk *sari*, with a toy bodice corresponding, of some expense, and of iridescent hues which glimmered in the light.

Side by side with the young woman in the habit, a moment before, there had come out upon the veranda the Residency Surgeon, who was kept at Kanhala, on such allowances as are expected in the Indian Medical Service, for little other purpose than to guard the health of the Resident and his assistants. Colonel Fendall was a handsome, a dignified, a kindly man of about fifty—an optimist without insight.

"Do not cry over your uncle, Miss Lowell," he now said to the young white woman, who had come out again. "You have a soft heart, and sensitive feelings which do you credit, I'm sure. But there is no need to be troubled about Colonel Moor."

"I am troubled about him just the same; I can't help

it," declared Laura Lowell, her eyes welling over anew. "Uncle Clive seems so strange, not himself at all, for a week past. You have seen how it is, Colonel Fendall. I am sure he is troubled about himself."

"Not at all, my dear Miss Lowell. Brain fag, a touch of the sun, depression, overwork, stomach out of order. I confess that I have not seen just such a case before in all its aspects. But it will all come right, believe me."

"My uncle has never eaten so well as during the last week. But he is certainly unhappy. Something is troubling him, which he cannot express. I believe he is wearying for Auntie Milly."

"I daresay. Mrs. Moor is a wise woman, a rare Indian housekeeper—not but that you do very nicely for your uncle, too, my dear. He seems sluggish, almost comatose: he is laying on flesh, which he never did before. You say that it is since the Maharaja's Feast that he has been like this?"

"Since that evening, one week ago. He never spoke one word to me driving back, or after getting home. Ever since he has been so queer—and, I am sure, unhappy."

"Anxiety, worry, strain, brain fag, perhaps the sun. Such things must run their course. I will send around some simple sedatives. We have to try one thing and another. That is the way to hit upon the right remedy, if, indeed, there is one. He may come right of himself all of a sudden."

"O, if he would. How clever you are, colonel!"

"Not at all, not at all. We have to try and assist nature. I'll tell you something, Miss Lowell. I believe I was once something as Colonel Moor now is. In passing my final medical examinations I undoubtedly overstrained my mental powers. I, too, have suffered from brain fag; though that was as a young man. And this was the curious form which it took. If you can believe me, I slept for one month on end."

"Never, Colonel Fendall!"

"I assure you; upon my word, it was so! I merely

16 The Song of Surrender

could not hold my head up. Fortunately, I was with my kind people, who had patience with me, and were not alarmed. They used to wake me up only for my meals ; and, for the rest, let me have my needed sleep out. You cannot cheat nature. At the end of a month I woke up, content to sleep only of nights thereafter."

"That is very interesting. But I am not comforted for my dear uncle. If he has had troubles, I have helped to bring them to him. I will tell you the truth. I was a bad, naughty, undutiful girl to unky for weeks before the Maharaja's Feast !"

She did not sob ; but two crystal tears fell from the cornflower eyes to the bamboo matting of the veranda.

Colonel Fendall partly understood ; yet would not admit anything unpleasant.

"I am sure you did not wish to grieve your uncle, to whom you are so devoted."

"I did not wish to ; yet I grieved him. I was selfish and wilful, to say the least. I added to the troubles which he had in the State, and from the Teutons. Oh, my dear uncle, what can I do to make it up to him ? He cannot seem to understand when I tell him that I love him, and am sorry. How can I help him ?"

"By continuing your admirable attendance on him, my dear."

"He cannot bear to have me away from him for long. I declare I won't go out riding this morning, but will sit at home with him."

Colonel Fendall gave a significant glance towards Amar Rao, standing about a rod away, upon the same veranda.

"Granting the company in which you ride, I do not think it will help your uncle to have you neglect your exercise and health. Indeed, I am sure that it will not. Take your morning's ride, which has already been delayed ; I speak as your medical attendant."

In the interests of her passion, Laura greatly wanted to take that ride ; though she also wanted to take care of her uncle.

"Radhabai looks after my uncle well when I am not with him ; she is a good ayah," she answered, hesitating, and beaming upon the handmaid.

"I do not doubt it," Colonel Fendall assented, unwinking.

"I'll go out for my ride," said Laura, impulsively. "But I won't be gone more than an hour. And as soon as I get back, I'll cable to Auntie Milly to come out at once, since my uncle needs her."

"Do nothing of the sort, Miss Lowell, I beg of you. Indeed, to do that would amount to taking the case out of my hands. Colonel Moor does not need his wife at present. But Mrs. Moor does need to have out, undisturbed, the half year with her children in England, for which she left Kanhala. We all know how unselfishly you vacated your own house for her, and came here to take her place beside your uncle."

"It was nothing. How happy my aunt is at Wendover, brooding over her six children. She has never before had them together without a break in the number. I want to do what is right."

"Of course you do. Then take no hasty action."

The bungalow was practically on a level with the ground outside. Colonel Fendall, ready to enter his car, stood on the lowest of the shallow steps, which almost touched the gravel of the driveway. Looking a little upward at Miss Lowell, he had a sudden perception of her mature physical perfection, of her blush-rose complexion, of the poise of her abounding health.

"For you, at least," he added, smiling, "I need send around no medicines."

"No, colonel. I am always well ; but I have never had such health in my life as since returning to India. I would be perfectly happy, but for anxiety about dear unky."

"He will come around. I will send him something that may help. We try one thing and another. But you will not keep that complexion much longer, Miss Lowell, if you continue to ride out at this hour in that

18 The Song of Surrender

highly-becoming blue hat. Take it off, and put on a good thick sun hat, a solar *topi*."

"Oh must I, doctor? One of those horrid mushroom things! They make me look so ugly."

"I am sure they do not. Anyhow, the Indian sun is a bad fellow; don't trust him!"

"I have trusted him for three months, and he has not hurt me yet. I love him, I glory in him! You know, of course, that I belong to this land? I am half Indian by blood; and all Indian by choice!"

As she uttered those words, she stood two steps above the somewhat flabby Residency Surgeon, seeming to oppress him with the unabashed beauty of colours and of contours. Here was no child of the sun, one would say, but a mingling of the choicest types of Europe. The figure was, perhaps, such as is more associated with Spain or with Italy. But for the rest, she seemed of the whitest, the uttermost, North—Scandinavian for choice, with the greater felicity of features and of expression. The skin was such as proverbially goes with such tawny, almost orange, locks. At this time Laura Lowell rode a good ten stone. Her height was best expressed by her lover, who used to say that she had just escaped being a tall woman—a fault peculiarly detested in India.

"Hush! you mustn't say such things, don't you know?" exclaimed Colonel Fendall comically, suavely. "It would grieve your uncle to hear you talk like that."

"I know that it did grieve him, time and again, and I'm sorry; but I can't help myself. Well, I'll be back in an hour."

"Good-bye, Miss Lowell; and remember that you're not to worry about your uncle"—shaking hands with her. "So long, Amar Rao; Walden," waving his hand twice at them in a rudimentary gesture of salaam.

He scrambled into his motor somewhat flustered; and rolled away.

"A fine girl, a powerfully fine young woman," he said to himself, as he leaned against the red leather

upholstering. "I daresay she has been a handful for her uncle, many a time. Never should have come out to India under the circumstances; fatal, simply fatal! I wouldn't answer for not going off my head myself, if my daughter carried on as Miss Lowell is doing with Amar Rao. They say that he as good as lives at the Residency. That isn't so; but I know that he is there at any hour he pleases. I wonder what's the matter with poor old Moor? Things coming to a crisis at the Maharaja's Feast. Gone idiotic in a night, I would be inclined to say. But then, it can't be; there's no precedent for such a thing. I can't begin to diagnose. I daresay I shall pull him through, with one thing and another. So Miss Lowell is not invited to the Sampsons' to-night, to meet the Bishop. A pretty pass, when the Lady of the Residency has lapsed from Residency society! One must draw the line somewhere. Infatuated, stark infatuated! A good girl, too; kind and tender-hearted as you could wish. I wonder how far things will go? Who lives shall see."

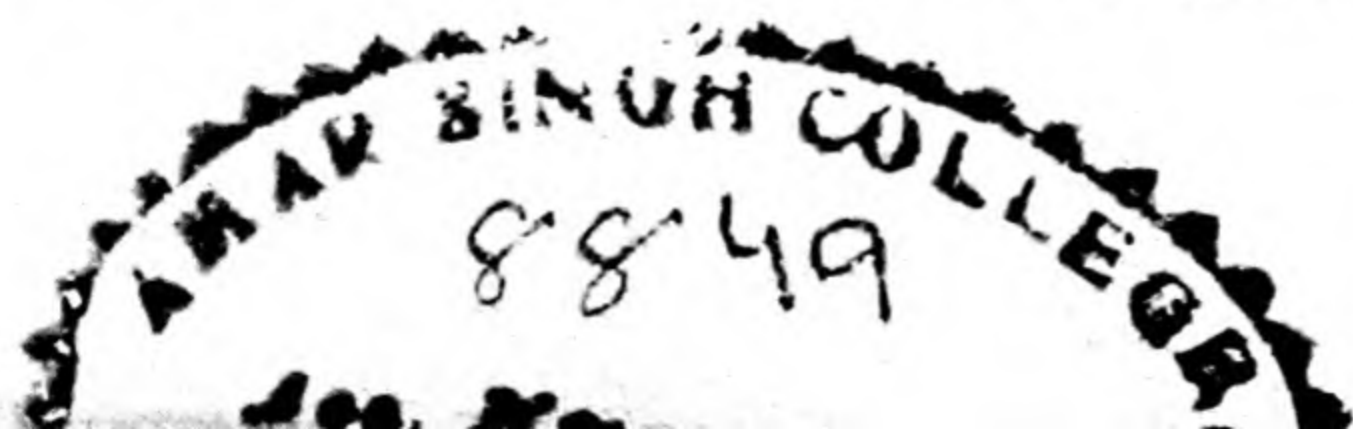
The veranda was no sooner clear, than Amar Rao advanced from the middle distance where he had hovered. He was glowing; a bit theatrical; and with a great passion that seemed to be enclosed in a happy serenity.

"My dearest Laura," he exclaimed, taking her hand. "Now that the old mollycoddle is gone!"

His left arm was around her shoulder. He bent forward. With his brown, yet delicately curved lips, he kissed her, not once, but many times, on the red and willing mouth.

He no longer much regarded appearances. The cavalry escort, and the grooms, were close outside. Yet the front veranda was shielded with trellis work, overgrown with morning glories and other climbing plants. None need have witnessed that embrace save the Reverend William Walden and the handmaids.

"You'll not be back in any hour's time, after keeping me waiting like this," Amar Rao announced.



"No?" Laura Lowell raised her head from his shoulder. "As you will, Prince. But I must arrange for uncle first. And I have not spoken to Star as yet."

As she lifted her head, she noted the extreme blackness of the short but bristling moustache which made all the hair on his face. So very dark it was, as to suggest purple shades, as in Assyrian bas-reliefs and in Indian drawings. A contrasting flash came from his right hand, as this caught a ray of sunlight. It was from a large pink diamond which she liked to have him wear—the only gorgeous touch in his studiously workmanlike attire. In addition to his other grades, he was the General commanding the four or five efficient regiments of Kanhala State.

"Star must be saluted, certainly," he said, moving forward with Laura to the veranda steps.

A groom led up Laura's special mount, the one that suited her so perfectly, her lover's gift, which had caused such clashings with her trusting uncle. It was an Arab half-bred of great beauty, coal-black save for a minute white star upon the forehead. The limbs seemed frail, yet were powerful within their moderate proportions. He had a delightful temper, great muscle, and, what Laura thought most important, *quite* a lovely tail. The chest was wide; there was endurance here. But it was the small exquisitely modelled head, with the lustrous great eyes, full of intelligence and gentleness, that was the triumph.

He stretched his head out upon Laura's shoulder, and whinnied with content. Then she threw her arms about the slender neck, and pulled close to her the head which was so full of drawing, kissing and caressing it. She stooped over, and whispered something into one of Star's ears.

"What did you say to him?" asked Amar Rao.

"That's my secret," answered Laura, blushing deliciously, and a little confused. "But Star understood."

"As I told you when you first saw him at my palace, I believe that he does understand something of human

speech. The most wonderful, sympathetic comprehension!"

"It is that. I never saw anything like it. I love singing to Star, but in English, as you told me that you did, when he is tired. I don't know how it is, but it soothes and rests him."

"I have experienced the fact, though never with any other horse. See, he wants something now."

The two handmaids had come near, with timid interest. One could perceive, upon a second glance, that the simple garb of the ayah, Radhabai, was not without expense. Each of her wrists, like little Ruth's, had about a dozen rainbow-hued glass bangles, which clashed musically, with their peculiar tinkle. These, in the days of rising prices, may cost a penny or two apiece. But as she moved, Radhabai's plump brown arms displayed, just above the elbow, a couple of tight gold armlets, roughly chiselled, but of undoubted weight.

"He wants me to sing to him," said Laura. "Shall I?"

"That is his reward after toil, Laura. His day's work is not begun, though it is time. Make no more delay. I have never admired you so much as at this moment. To-day shall be an epoch in our love!"

"*Ee-shtarr* wants some sugar from the basin," cried Ruth in Marathi, with the familiarity to which she was encouraged. She clapped her hands till the bangles rang a glassy peal, and her silken garment shimmered in the sunlight of the steps—a dainty figure!

"I believe that Ruth is right," said Amar Rao, beaming down at the child.

"Alas for my songs!" cried Laura, laughing.

She tripped round the corner of that veranda, to the side veranda, where the remains of the early breakfast were, like a schoolgirl, though she was twenty-seven.

In a minute she was back, her two palms filled with the contents of the sugar bowl.

Star, who had been gently but persistently asking for something, was now satisfied. He lipped up the lumps of

sugar from Laura's hands, the great jewels which were his eyes wandering from her to one or other of the group. Amar Rao's eyes were as lustrous, and somewhat more sinister. They seemed to envelop the desired one with a great passion, of which she was perfectly aware; and to warn all intruders from his path. Yet most natives of India have fine eyes, at least potentially, and before their lives have been spoiled.

Hindus, though not invariably kind to animals, like to see them made much of. The grooms and the troopers, with respectful interest, were watching the feeding and the petting of Laura's beautiful black steed.

Among them, perched upon a particularly big horse, and looking smaller in contrast than ever, was Laura's groom, Bahiru, or, with the affix of politeness, Bahiroba. From the mere grooming of her horse, with the privilege of sometimes running in the dust beside her, he had lately been promoted to ride wherever she went on Star, with a fresh livery, and an addition of one rupee to his month's salary, which brought this to something over half a sovereign, without keep. He was beginning to feel his oats—a delicate phrase this, for he was supposed to steal them from his horse. Little Bahiru, of the minute features, brain, and limbs, of the half-dozen nice children, of the bouncing virago of a wife, of the eyes and desires which were accused of wandering to Radhabai in the bungalow!

Amar Rao's mount was a big-boned roan Kabuli, standing sixteen hands, with huge quarters, and a vicious temper, but making a showy appearance.

"Come, Laura," he began to say impatiently. "We must get off."

"I won't go without saying good-bye once more to my uncle," she cried, in her occasionally wilful way.

For Laura's sake, Amar Rao had been obliged to modify his originally scornful, brutal manner towards the stricken Resident. Though there was much that she could not see, she saw this with instant resentment; and, for all her infatuation, she had refused to endure it.

"I'm going to be good to poor unky, and you shall be too," she had laid down the law, for once.

So, with a grim humour, he had reversed his attitude. He treated Colonel Moor with a bantering good-nature, outwardly very respectful. The colonel, from dreading and hating him, had become quite fond of him, even clinging to him pitifully, childishly, from some strange hallucination.

While Amar Rao stood by the steps for a moment with Radhabai, his burning eyes rested upon her with a glance of command. Since he had, by his personal prowess, saved the handmaid from a watery grave, there had been an intelligence, a bond between them. Though he might never have occasion to draw upon this fund of devotion, the Christian Maharin was the vassal, the bondwoman at need, of the Maratha prince.

Many eyes were fixed upon the painted screen of split bamboo which had been dropped over the doorway. Through its semi-obscurity, Laura could be descried, by the better eyes, wheedling her uncle within.

"Do not try to come outside, dear unky," she was saying. "The light will trouble your eyes."

And he, already dwindled in height, and grown almost obese, could just be made out, scrabbling painfully in the air at something that would, apparently, attack his eyes.

Laura's blue eyes were again wet when she hastily came out. It was Walden who deftly helped her to her seat, a side-saddle of the most comfortable and conventional; for Amar Rao was never alert in the rendering of such alien attentions to womankind.

He and Walden mounted; and the cavalcade clattered at a slow trot down the driveway.

CHAPTER II

THE STRANGER

AS they rode along, still within the grounds of the Residency, Laura's notice was attracted by a stalwart figure, some distance ahead, ranged beside the driveway to allow them to pass.

She dropped back, for a second, to within speaking distance of Bahiru.

"Who is that on the road ahead of us, Bahiroba?"

Bahiru scanned the private road with blinking eyes. Then his little chestnut countenance lighted up with an expression of unusual intelligence.

"That, Missybai," he said, grinning, glad to oblige Laura, "is an *isami* [an individual, a person, a man]."

"Stupid!" exclaimed Laura; "I wanted to know what man, since he is coming towards the Residency."

"I can at least tell you more than Bahiru," said Amar Rao; "though you may complain of my answering by categories, like the people of our country. That is, I can tell you what that man is, though not who. He is a Native Christian."

They were by this time opposite him, as he stood barefooted by the road. His white garments were spotless, save for recent dust; and around his neck were suspended, from invincible frugal habit, a pair of bright red leather sandals, worth a rupee (16d.), which he would probably have put on before reaching the house. A good deal of a man, this, a cursory glance would have told any judge of men. Upright, wiry, of good height for the Maratha country, with a somewhat worn, wary face, grizzled hair where he had not shaved for

several days, and eyes which rested upon yours with a peculiarly watchful expression—watchful to oblige, though not obsequious. On his expressive features (as the characters of Dickens say) it could be read that he was moved, disappointed, eager. His eyes rested well-nigh with worship upon Laura, radiant upon her black Arab, noticeable with her lissome figure. At the same time they showed due deference for the second prince of the land. His mouth twitched automatically.

Having evidently restrained an impulse to fall forward at full length in the dust, the stranger stood collected, his head bowed, his hands, with the palms joined, pressed to his nose and forehead, in the most respectful attitude possible, short of abjectness.

They scrutinised him minutely as they rode past, returning his salaam; while he devoured them with his eyes.

"He looked disappointed," said Laura. "I wonder if he wanted to see my uncle, or me. I half think that I have seen that man before."

"What can it matter?" answered Amar Rao crossly. "He is one of the perverts, who have accepted Christianity for bread."

"Oh, he should not have done that," said Laura. "You do not like Native Christians?"

"Are they not traitors to our land, the only sincere supporters of the British Raj? Out they shall go, or recant, when I have made a new India!"

Laura was imposed upon by his haughtiness, the fine air of command with which he flung his hand outward, as if possessing India.

"Besides," he added, "this is a common man, a Mahar such as your Radhabai is. The missionaries have yet to show that they can make other converts."

It may be said that every native can place every other, for origin and standing, by infallible little signs which usually escape a European. Kanhala was the centre of several missionary organisations, which, for the most part, laboured heavily in the void.

Very handsome Amar Rao seemed to Laura that morning, with his voice of passion, his eyes scornful of others and tender only to her. The best description of Bartle Frere speaks of his "head like that of a Konkani Brahmin, and delicate, well-cut features." Amar Rao was not a Brahmin, and not quite a Konkani, though he had estates in the Konkan. But some of the reigning Maratha families have breeding, as lightness of complexion, only inferior to Brahmins, with the pride of rule as well.

"And I," said Laura softly, "am doing the opposite to that poor man. From a Christian I am becoming a Hindu, for the love of you!"

"Doubtless," he answered, taking it all for granted. "But not until I give the word for it. It will make a greater scandal than I can yet face. You are to sit tight in the Residency till I call you from it. Not a word of such a thing to-day! There are more pressing things on hand."

They had come by this time to where the driveway from the Residency joins the public road. The view, obscured hitherto by the large trees within the grounds, suddenly opened out. Beyond the broad river bed, and a little upward, shone the scene which always transported Laura—the separate, yet twin palaces of Amar Rao, with the wealth of greenery between, and, rising out of this for two hundred feet, the tower of white marble, a beacon for a score of miles in every direction. But what, she always asked herself with a delicious thrill, was this a beacon for? and what signified that corner, that "monstrous cantle," truncated from the top of the tower? and why, O why, was the flag, in shape a broad pennon, which shook forever against the copper or the starlit sky of day or night, at that altitude, of such a blood-red, startling hue?

It was the colour of the little pennons, now merrily streaming in the breeze, borne behind her by the troopers of her lover's escort. Such an uncompromising, threatening colour as was this scarlet: it seemed to

smite one, like the sound of a trumpet ! Her uncle had told Laura that this bold flag had been the emblem of Kanhala State ever since the conquering founder, the grandfather of Amar Rao and of the present Maharaja, nearly a hundred years before. But everything else in the grandiose scene before her had been the creation of her lover.

How could she help but love such a lover, she was humbly saying to herself, with a little gulp.

For coloration the scene was certainly unrivalled. And that was what her lover was whispering to her at that moment about herself :

“ There was surely never such colouring as you have, my Laura ! That bronze hair, now, above the blue of your habit and of your eyes ! And that red of lips and cheeks, which I confess that the whole of my broad and beloved India, so fertile in beauty, cannot furnish from Himalaya to the two seas ! It is much for a shape to be merely graceful. But when it is, as yours, both graceful and luscious—— ! ”

They were passing out of the Residency grounds, beside the hedges which, perhaps from some peculiarity of the soil just there, produced quantities of the familiar, uncanny datura blossoms. Fleshly, formed like bells or trumpets, attractive only at the first hasty glance, they flaunted their white surfaces, as if boasting of their subtle property to blast the human intellect in a night.

A dozen riders upon biggish horses perhaps make a rather numerous company in which to ride forth making love.

Laura's heart sang with happiness. She never kept her reds for long ; but she could not blush much brighter than she did at this last speech.

On coming out upon the public road, Amar Rao turned sharply to the left, with Laura at his side.

Walden, with a fearsome following of grooms and of troopers, was innocently turning his horse in the same direction.

Then was it given to Laura to behold an object lesson of what can be accomplished by a single look.

Amar Rao turned around and just looked at poor Walden. He merely looked, without saying a word. It was not a scowl. But it was a look of command, an angry, annihilating look, as if from a thunder cloud.

It was a master's look, such as many a European would have refused to take from any native whatsoever. But the Reverend William Walden took it like a lamb.

"Oh, all right, Amar Rao," he said jovially, turning his horse to the right hand, towards the bridge which crossed the Krishna higher up. "I suppose I'll see you at the palace for breakfast."

He did nothing in a slipshod way. He expressly told Bahiru to ride back to the Residency ; and, calling the corporal of the escort, he galloped off citywards with the troopers and the two other grooms.

CHAPTER III

THE SERVANTS' LINES

BAHIRU, having turned his too bulky steed, on which he perched like a monkey, rode back through the Residency grounds, pondering these things, so far as he was capable of thought.

He should have ridden around to the rear of the bungalow, where were the stables and the servants' houses. But, though he knew that it was cheeky of him, he steered the animal past the front of the Residency, under the porch, which was not meant for the likes of him. He did this on the sporting chance of a glimpse of Radhabai.

She was there upon the front veranda, looking as if she owned the premises. Undoubtedly she was a fine woman. But, though not usually ungentle, she tossed her head at the sight of him anchored needlessly before the steps, set her hands upon her hips, and pronounced :

"Go to your own wife, O Bahiroba !"

This he proceeded to do, with a sickly smile.

Having stabled his steed, he walked around the lordly banyan tree which gave some shade to the centre of the servants' courtyard, towards his one-room house. There was a hangdog look upon his face ; but he was still proud of himself in some respects.

From a distance he could see that his wife, Rakhma, had company.

She sat on the unsheltered earthen terrace before their door, her head thrown back against the door-post, her breast-jacket undone, feeding their youngest baby, quite unclad, who had a slight feverishness. She also

was a fine woman, or would have been, with a few inches more of height, and if she had not looked so heathenish. For her teeth had been enamelled black ; transverse bars of red paint ran across her low forehead ; while a nose-ring hung far down from a well-shaped nose, which possibly inclined a little bit to one side. Here, as in her husband and children, were what are called Aryan or Caucasian features, although so near to the negritic South of India. The Bahirus were nothing if not pure Marathas, having come from northwards.

For the rest, Rakhmabai, or Mrs. Bahiru, had her points, including the lavish Indian figure. Her fine eyes could flash a merry smile, a little impeded in effect by the darkened teeth ; and she was a devoted mother according to her lights. Most of her children stood or leaned about her now, only one or two of them at all clad. They had Bahiru's curious smallness and his delicate features ; while they had improved upon his brain, being full of gentle intelligence.

And before the family group, evidently making friends rapidly, sometimes stooping down and patting a little head, was a tall stranger of perhaps fifty, an iron-shod staff in his hand, in spotless white cotton garments, with his red sandals or slippers now on his feet. Even from his back, Bahiru could tell, though not observant, that this was no fellow-casteman.

Hindu women are supposed to speak to few men except their husbands. But there are reasonable exceptions to all rules. Women who live in the compounds of Europeans get tempered to miscellaneous intercourse. The stranger was a man of gravity, who could speak like a father to most young women. He also, from his interest in the ailing infant, suggested a humble wandering doctor of sorts, such as can make their way anywhere in the East.

Bahiru was not jealous, not he : he only hoped that his wife would not be !

Rakhma was volubly declaring to the stranger :

" Now what passes me, and what I cannot stomach,

is this : the unequal rewards of virtue and of vice in this world. Here am I, a blameless Hindu matron, whose virtue has never been tempted, with six living children ! Behold this nose-ring, that dances upon my lips as I talk. It is but of brass ; while the spangles upon it are of glass. My nose, too, will never be as straight as it was before that shameless one pulled it out of shape : that is another story, but may her grandparents be hyænas for it ! There is a noble castewoman for you, one that you should be truly proud of, Radhabai at the bungalow, a Mahar Christian like yourself—why couldn't you leave the teachings of the whitefaces alone ? You saw her as you came past, I'll be bound."

The stranger had, indeed, seen Radhabai strutting on the front veranda ; and, though knowing her for a fellow Christian, had thought it more promising to go further on his errand of making friends, and seeking information in the Residency compound. He said as much discreetly.

"She wears no nose ring," continued Rakhma : "she counts herself superior to them, though, indeed, low caste women are not obliged to wear them, while women without *abru* [reputation], like herself, are not allowed to ! But did you notice her arms ? Armlets she has there of the thickest : not silver, not silver-gilt, but solid gold ! Did you ever hear of such a thing in an ayah ?—though few of them are virtuous. But think of Radhabai—while I wear brass ! Did you ever, now ? She will blossom out into gold anklets next, take my word for it—the gift of the fool Resident Sahib, who has swallowed——. But here are They, coming back before their time."

"They" meant Bahiru, who now shambled up, with a grudging salaam to the affable stranger.

Hindu wives are supposed to refer to their husbands only thus in the third person plural, without ever letting the name pass their lips. But Rakhmabai, being vivacious, did not invariably observe this safe rule.

32 The Song of Surrender

Little Bahiru brought with him, so he believed, the centre of the universe. He soliloquised aloud :

"This is a Mahar. I wonder what he wants here. We are Maratha people. We could eat with the ruling family, and not be contaminated. Wah! but the Raja Amar Rao is a great and terrible prince. It does not do to cross *his* path. What a look of lightnings was that which he gave to his Padre Sahib just now, when he wished to ride alone with his woman, who is my Missybai. Even from afar, it turned my liver to water. I could not endure such a look and live. Yet does the Raja Sahib think highly of me. He has spoken to me in an affable way such as my white masters never use. 'Thank you, Bhai,' (and he is my caste brother) said he to me when I took him a note from the Missybai two or four days ago ; and he gave me two shining rupees."

"*Aray*, where are those two rupees?" cried Rakhma, leaping upwards with such vehemence that the child ceased sucking.

She was unashamed, as she could be, in her sprawling, semi-nude domestic exposure. Yet she was violent on the subject of the Madam Sahibs baring their white bosoms in order to dance ; and there is a difference.

Still glaring at her husband, she hushed the wailing infant. Then she stretched out one foot, and with the prehensile toes picked up for her second youngest child a rudimentary wooden doll, crudely painted yellow and red, and almost flat, which had rolled out of the child's reach. One might have seen that the large toe was girdled by a heavy ring of twisted silver, certainly worth some rupees.

Bahiru had double reason to quail, for, in his desire to show off, he had said two rupees where one rupee would have been the truth.

When Rakhma had again settled herself, she pointedly addressed the stranger, past her husband.

"They think that they are somebody big. But let them first stand five feet high ; and let them once get paid the extra rupee of their monthly salary ! They

have let out, in boasting, the fact that they received a present from the Raja Amar Rao, who is always generous. They shall account to me, later, for those two shining rupees. They would have liked me to know nothing about it; only it slipped out. They cherish an admiration for the strapping ayah that you know of, Dada. Perhaps they would have liked to give her a present—neglecting their own little child, who lies here ill with the fever. Wah! I know their tricks. I saw them ride back the longer way to the stable, so as to go under the porch. I saw you, O Ba——.”

Almost she had called her husband by his name, which would have been highly improper.

“Nay, Bai,” said the visitor, deprecatingly; “as a stranger, I understand not such things. But the Gospel of Christ I understand; and somewhat of simple healing.”

“This,” said Rakhama to her husband by way of belated introduction and deferring the hour of reckoning in her wish for a downright good gossip, “is one Raghoba Dada, a Christian preacher and peddler. He has come all the way from Tulsipur, in the British Raj, in order to see our Missybai, the KERANI. He says he has much learning in the healing arts.”

“I came from Tulsipur, truly,” said Raghoba hastily. “And being here, I would fain salute the daughter of the revered *swargwasi* [now in heaven] Lord Sahib. But I preach the Gospel without price; nor am I supposed to take payment for such cures as I may make. That is a matter of good will, perhaps to cover the cost of the medicines, which I send for all the way to Poona.”

“Do you, now?” said Bahiru, daring to take an interest in life again. “That is a long way, isn’t it? Poona and Tulsipur. I have heard of those places. They are in British India, to the northward from here. But is not all British India a small affair compared to our Maratha Kingdom of Kanhala?”

“The British Raj does, indeed, girdle this noble kingdom; yet is inconsiderable in comparison,” admitted

34 The Song of Surrender

Raghoba, the corner of his mouth twitching with the nervous motion for which he was not responsible.

“Now as touching your learning, O Dada,” proceeded Bahiru, assuming dignity as he tested qualifications. “Do you know English, now?”

“How should I not know English?” replied Raghoba, his eyes twinkling, his mouth twitching anew. “Deign to listen. I know ACONITE, BELLADONNA, CAMOMILLA, IPECACUANHA!”

Bahiru and his wife, neither of whom could read at all, were much impressed by this from one who could barely spell out in his own tongue, Marathi.

They both nodded their heads sagaciously.

“That does sound learned,” said Bahiru, still keeping the word. “It is as good as Sanskrit. Verily, this man is worthy to doctor our little one.”

Raghoba was worthy, but by virtue of his powers of observation, and a certain natural gift of healing.

He took out of the end of his turban cloth, where they had been rolled tight, half a dozen neat homœopathic flasks, with the tiny white globules inside. Finding the one needed, by means of some cryptogram, he inserted a single pillule within the pitifully small mouth of the ailing infant, and watched it swallowed. He made over a dozen of the pills, wrapped in paper, to the parents.

“At that age, one is enough at a time. At intervals of every two hours. Keep the child out of the sun; and covered, at least after nightfall. I come again in the morning, to see how it prospers.”

“With your prayers and blessing!” said these two bigoted Hindus, able to meet him upon so much of a common ground.

“Not my blessing, but that of Parameshwar.”

“With the blessing of Parameshwar!”

Thus did Raghoba make his way, and sometimes make friends for his cause, where very many could not. It may be mentioned that the frightfully rigid caste rules do not apply to children, and are relaxed as to medicines. Raghoba saw little prospect, in this quarter,

of the ultimate small fee which was also dear to him ; but he did his work from force of habit.

Then, with the infant laid to slumber within, did Rakhmabai discharge a pattering hail of questions at Raghoba about the places and the people he came from. For Tulsipur was a notorious centre of discontent, where the Governor of Bombay, Sir Robert Lowell, had lately been murdered. These things acutely interested the occupants of the Residency compound at Kanhala. For the bewildered murderer had been the undoubted brother of Laura Lowell, as the victim was her father. Nationalist sympathies from every part of India went forth to the mother of Bapu and of Laura, Muktabai, the retired bazar woman of Tulsipur. Through a certain mist, she seemed, from afar, an august "mother of sorrows, mother of cursing, mother of tears."

But, however battered with queries, Raghoba would not give himself away. He was never one to display all his shop goods in the window. He was naturally discreet, and would not admit the closeness in which he had stood to critical events.

"Nay, tell us at least something about Muktabai," pleaded Rakhma. "You must at least have seen her at a distance. How does she bear her sorrow and her glory?—though she is but a Maharin!"

"Fewer words, fewer troubles, Bai. We Christians are not allowed to associate with such as Muktabai. Yet did I set eyes on her before leaving Tulsipur. A little, withered woman is she, still comely of face, and strong in health. Very calmly and proudly she bears herself, even as if, as you say, she gloried in the calamity which she has brought upon all concerned."

No further than this could they draw him. But they had news of pith and of moment to communicate to him, quite ready to hear.

"Upon this compound also has a calamity fallen," said Rakhma. "I did always rail at the Great Sahib, in the bungalow there, while he was a man. But now that

36 The Song of Surrender

he is thus stricken I confess that I am sometimes frightened. It may—when it is known—be as much as the service of us all is worth.”

The catastrophe had, indeed, shocked even her frivolous ignorance into some sobriety.

“POUST?” asked Raghoba, with a searching glance.

“The same.”

“Alas, alas!” cried Raghoba, much moved, his head fallen, and beating his bosom in unaffected grief. “Even thus was it buzzed in the bazars of Tulsipur before I left, some days since. But now I know that it is true. Tell me, Bai, who hath done this great wickedness?”

“Are you a friend of the Resident Sahib?” asked Rakhma suspiciously; “or of his niece, the shameless KERANI?”

“Nay, I cannot listen to such speech,” said Raghoba, hurt, and taking up his long iron-shod staff.

“Go not yet, Raghoba Dada! I suppose it was wicked to risk taking the bread out of the mouths of us all. At the Maharaja’s Feast for all Europeans it happened, eight days ago.”

“So did we hear, even a hundred and fifty miles to the northward. And at whose hands, Bai?”

“At the hands of a wicked man, as you say, Dada. Ah, he was a bad lot, that Gaspar! For months did he rule this compound, and the hundred poor folk in it, with a rod of iron. He was the *bootlair dada* here until two or four months ago. He is a *Christi manus* like yourself, only from Goa. And he has the foreign vice, which means the drinking of *daru*.”

Raghoba winced at this unanswerable scoff.

“Gaspar Dada loved Radhabai, as well as liquor. Ah, what a time we had in this house while Radha lived next door, with her little Kerani. There wasn’t any husband to *that*, I can tell you! Don’t you stand there with such a hangdog grin, you——! I believe that They rather enjoyed having Radha live in the next room. Now she is promoted to the bungalow, and to the Colonel Sahib: the Missybai, whom I may not call by her right

name before you, keeps the little Kerani, Ruth-ee-bai, in her bedroom and at her table. Like to like, say I! Anyhow, these two fellow Christians of yours have no further need of the little room next to ours, living, as they do, altogether in the bungalow. It would be such an accommodation to us to be able to overflow into the next house. Yet behold that padlock!"

She pointed with spite at the large iron padlock shutting out access to the bare little room which was so near, and would have been so convenient.

"Radha"—and she spat at the name—"only does it to annoy. She says that she still wants this room to keep her boxes in—that are overflowing with the gifts of those in the Great House, whom I may not abuse! But how many boxes did she have when she first came to live beside us?"

"Ask not me," said Raghoba, "for I am of yesterday or of last Tuesday, in these parts. And now may we let Radhabai rest, and proceed with the tale of Gaspar?"

"He always favoured Radhabai unjustly, as against us, while he had the power. But he fell by drink—which is a vice that we would scorn to practise. Great shame and trouble did he bring, in the matter of a public dinner, upon the Colonel Sahib, who had put him over all us caste servants, but who then thrashed Gaspar Dada as we would not thrash a dog. Even in the case of an enemy, we like not to see a native beaten by a European. Then did Gaspar Dada lift his head from the dust, and call after the cruel Resident Sahib: 'Beware, for I will make you drink *POUST* when you least know it.' I heard him threaten; though the words were English."

"What happened after?"

"Gaspar was in hiding for some weeks, for fear that his master should set eyes on him, and again thrash him. It is a long tale. But Sampson Doctorin Sahib, who was born and bred in this land, and who is not altogether such a fool as most white folks, interceded for Gaspar. She took him to be her *bootlair*, wherein he has skill; and

38 The Song of Surrender

to us she gave her former *bootlair*, who is a mild man, walking moderately."

"I am glad to hear it ; yet proceed."

"On the night of the feast to Europeans, when servants are borrowed from many of the bungalows, Gaspar stood behind the Colonel Sahib's chair, and caused him to drink that which hath wrought as it hath. And the next morning, lo and behold, there was no Gaspar Dada. If he is in hiding, there is no word of him. He has vanished from the face of things as if he had never been."

"That looks bad," said Raghoba, sighing. "Verily, this is a land where wicked things are practised, of which our high-minded rulers do not dream. Great will be the vengeance, when this is known. But how said you just now, 'when it is known'?"

"For it is not suspected as yet. They think that some light illness, though obscure, hath fallen upon the Great Sahib. Were there ever such fools as the Sahib-lok?"

Her unrestrained laughter, and Bahiru's giggle, were not pleasant to the Christian preacher, who held his peace.

An observer would have noticed that Raghoba, for all his genuine tincture of European religion and loyalty, was a shade or two darker than his hosts ; for caste means nothing if it does not mean breeding, and precisely colour, *varna*.

The shadows had changed ; the morning was getting on. From where they sat, the creaking of the *mot*, the plashing of the kindly water, the innumerable life of the great banyan tree, were much more audible than at the bungalow.

A small ape had descended behind them from the low roof, and successfully retreated, bearing in each hand a sweet potato, stolen from the scant vegetarian household supplies of the Bahiru household.

"Wah ! may all plagues consume him !" cried Rakh-mabai, scrambling to her feet, and pursuing, with stones

and with abuse, the ape, who chattered back. "We cannot live our lives here in peace for this persecution."

"Yet do I not take the lives of the innocent Wanar-*lok*, as did the Colonel Sahib," she added. "His niece, too, killed one of the patriarchal serpent-deities from the banyan, centuries old, the guardians of these grounds. Truly, they have brought their fate upon themselves."

"She knew no books, she wore no bodice."

Yet Rakhmabai uttered the thought of India more truly than any of the more educated voices.

"I have not spoken of the KERANI Missybai, O Raghoba Dada," she pursued, "since you seem to be sensitive on that subject. Scouring the countryside on horseback with our Raja Amar Rao, who is a brave prince, with all his foreign ways and tastes. Preferably alone—though they have not before dismissed their escort to begin with, like this. You saw how it was with your own eyes. Here is Amar Rao's home, while this fancy lasts; though many of us think that he is lowering himself."

Raghoba was heavy at heart, as he rose to go.

"Come a little later than this to-morrow, Dada, if you would see the Missybai. And forget not the precious globules for our little one. Of a truth, there are no fools like these Sahibs, who will not see what is held before their eyes. For here is an example always before them (yet they are too proud to look at it) of what the terrible drug may do to its victims. If you come about an hour before noon to-morrow, you will be able to see Pi-turr."

"Pi-turr?"

"He is a relative of the new *bootlair dada*. He comes to bring Goa bread; yet he takes away twice as much, in his own belly, of the Sahib's costly food, made of our slaughtered fellow creatures. But you will see."

"I shall, Bai. Nor shall I forget the little globules, of sugar and of healing tincture."

"Go not quite yet. There may be some bond, of

which we know not, between you and the too white Missybai who is yet Muktabai's child. Perhaps you could influence her to help us in a trifling matter."

"Nay, I am as the dust of the road to the revered Lowell Missybai, the cherished child of the noble Lord Sahib who was slain."

"It is touching my Ramya here."

Ramya, or Rama, was the eldest Bahiru, a diminutive bronze image who did not seem his real age of ten; yet well shaped, well featured, evidently all there.

"You know what fools our white rulers are in almost every detail of life. Not a thing that we would not do differently! Now as touching their folly of balls. It is a perfect mania. Instead of sitting contentedly on their heels to rest, they must needs come to their Club, which is in these grounds, to toss balls about. White balls, green balls, feathered balls, heavy wooden balls on the ground. I speak not of the small balls which they hit from horseback, or afoot. Now all these balls must be fetched again by boys, who are splendidly dressed, and paid a lordly wage. It is three rupees a month—nearly one half of what They can earn. There is a vacancy at the Club. O Dada, if you could speak to the Missybai to speak to others to have our Ramya appointed, it would be providential!"

"I will see," said Raghoba, edging off.

"The Colonel Sahib is chattering like one of the apes he slew," her words came trailing after him. "But no one sees—except everybody! Shiva and Shakti alone know when the Missybai will return from this famous ride with her Hindu lover!"

CHAPTER IV

THE RACE

"CAME back a maid no more," hummed Amar Rao, in a voice too low for Laura to hear.

She had been impressed by the way in which he had rid himself of his followers without a word spoken. She would have lingered at the corner ; and twisted herself around, looking back at the shining double palace across the river, and at the monumental truncated tower, flaunting its scarlet standard of defiance. This was but one of her lover's dwellings ! The sight of the dwindled sacred stream brought to her, as if it were yesterday, the day of sudden flood when he had rescued her handmaid from the swirling waters.

"How handsome he looks !" she was saying to herself. "He does not seem to be angry or troubled of late. Who would not love such a lover ? It is thought to be much to have a lover who looks like a Prince, or like a hero in a novel. But my Amar is a Prince : he is a hero ; and he loves me !"

Aloud she ventured :

"When will you take me to be with you always, at the Lakshimi Vilas, or at Quibra ?"

"Not yet !" he declared with decision. "Must I still repeat that I need you at the Residency as my representative for the present ? Yet never did I love you quite so well as to-day, my Laura."

Her long brown lashes drooped over the violet orbs which had met his burning eyes, and fallen before them.

They were ranged, for a moment, across the road, looking northwards. Laura's reins had fallen upon

42 The Song of Surrender

Star's neck. Her hands, still guiltless of rings, were folded over a magnificent bust, which heaved.

"I will not complain," she said. "There or here I am yours, as I can best serve our love."

He felt the intoxication of her sumptuous womanhood.

"That is the right Hindu wife," he said, surveying her slowly, several times, from bronze head to little spurred foot. "That is the way of Indian love."

They rode at a foot pace, southwards along the admirable roads of the cantonment, or the European quarter, of Kanhala City.

It illustrates the English ignorance of India, a good deal more crass than any Indian ignorance of England, that few, even among educated Englishmen, have ever heard of the noble State of Kanhala, with its vigorous population of three millions, its area of sixteen thousand square miles. It is the southernmost outpost (as Gwalior is the northernmost) of the far-flung Maratha dominion—really a history, though merely of conquest, to stir the blood, and one of which any race might be proud.

Kanhala State makes a variegated block, nearly rectangular, flung across the furthest Western Ghats, from near Mysore to the Arabian sea, between the Bombay Presidency and the fascinating, incredible matriarchal world (greatly more tropical) of Malabar. Its capital city, of the same name, has some seventy thousand turbulent inhabitants, exulting in their Hinduism, and in their Maratha nationality. Much of the State is upon a plateau some two thousand feet above the sea, and therefore enjoying a climate to be called good. The Indian peninsula here so narrows that Kanhala may, with equal accuracy, be spoken of as either in Western or in South India.

Raja Sir Amar Rao, the younger, and until lately the very dominant, brother in the rather recent ruling family of the Banswaras, rode now, with the beautiful white Eurasian, outward from Kanhala City.

They came to the desolate khaki expanse which was esteemed the centre of the cantonment, where was the rudimentary structure in which the excellent band of Kanhala State, called the Maharaja's, but controlled by Amar Rao, was wont to perform on stated evenings. Something else was now being put up adjoining. It consisted, as yet, of but an ugly canopy, like a metal umbrella lifted fifteen feet into the air.

"This is where the Mutiny Gun used to stand," said Laura. "I remember it, when I first came to Kanhala, straddling like a huge insect across the plain. Ah, what a night it gave us! Do you remember the gathering of the clans at the Residency?"

"The Mutiny Gun: precisely," said her lover, wincing. "Some night other guns shall go off which will be no joke to the sleeping English throughout India. But have you noticed what my unhappy brother is bent upon putting up here?"

"Statues of the King-Emperor and the Queen-Empress, are they not to be?"

"Squat statues of King George and Queen Mary, if you please, with globe and crowns and sceptre all complete. Of cast metal, since marble would crack in this sun, even under a canopy. Made in part from the gun which burst here in going off. What an original and striking idea, altogether worthy of my brother Balwant! Offered as a special mark of loyalty, of his repentance for what he was not responsible for, and as a bid for the Grand Cross of the Indian Empire, which has been withheld from him so long only because of his well-known foolishness."

"I never set eyes on the Maharaja until the Feast, a week ago," said Laura; "but since then I have met him more than once. He seems to be a dear old silly."

"That is about his size—though he can be wicked and spiteful as well. Pity that the monuments of Indian loyalty cannot sometimes have a touch of distinction, not to say beauty! Really, Edinburgh has some decent statues, compared to anything in India; yet Lord

44 The Song of Surrender

Rosebery has wished that they would all rush violently down into the sea ! ”

Laura laughed, without too much following.

“ When these precious statues arrive from the caster’s,” Amar Rao grumbled on, “ I shall be expected to furnish an armed guard for them.”

“ Do you mean to say that the statues of our King and Queen would not be safe without sepoy’s to guard them ? ”

“ Not for an instant, by day or night. There is a cheerful index of Indian loyalty for you ! Nor are such outbreaks to be classed with the freaks of your English suffragettes. Gad ! wouldn’t I like to have the handling of some of your superfluous Englishwomen ! ”

“ I wish that you could,” said Laura, sweetly and sincerely.

“ Yet how much longer,” said Amar Rao, with a swift veering of thought, “ can a Government claim respect, which pompously gives rewards for the arrest of assassins whom it cannot convict ? Bah ! I am talking politics to a woman ! ”

Setting spurs to his roan Kabuli, he galloped ahead. Laura, laughing, followed as soon as she could collect herself ; and, it was to be noted, overtook the great horse with little difficulty.

Thus they clattered merrily out of Kanhala cantonments.

The roads just here were not much encumbered. Every now and then they passed some of the lithe, small Marathas of the country, walking with springy step and uplifted head, their red or green turban-ends streaming for a yard behind them. A few of these prostrated themselves, according to old custom, by the side of the road, at the sight of one who had been the practical ruler of the land. But most were content to stand humbly by the side of the road, hands uplifted to brow, as Raghoba had done, as the riders passed. Amar Rao was careless in returning these salutes, of which Laura took no notice.

The pedestrians often turned to gaze after the riders.

"There goes the Raja Amar Rao," they would remark to one another. "He is not as our gentle and pious Maharaja, who brings blessings upon our land by his austerities. Yet is the Raja a gallant prince—if he did not incline too much to foreign ways. To think of riding in the eyes of the sun like that with his white *bibi*! Have the women of the Sahibs no shame? To be sure, she is a fair painted piece! Yet is she the daughter of Muktabai of Tulsipur, the Maharin. Like mother, like daughter, say I."

Or more briefly :

"There is the white mistress of our Raja Amar Rao."

But she was not that yet.

They pulled up from a breathless gallop in the pleasant hilly country a few miles to the south of Kanhala.

"My brother has begun attending the Club in your grounds," said Amar Rao, as they again rode onward at a slower pace, between the wayside trees which did not always give shade. "He is waking up. He shows unsuspected signs of intelligence in his old age. 'Enough of austerities,' he begins to think: 'I would fain enjoy life before the end. Mrs Rennie is a brown-eyed beauty of low caste in her own country, who may be easily won.'"

"It is too funny," said Laura, "watching him trying to play badminton, and making eyes at Mrs. Rennie at the same time. It is a shame to persecute her. I do not think that he will go far in that direction."

"I would not wish to. Sluggish and self-centred—incapable of passion or adventure! I was never attracted by Mrs. Rennie. Yet I must admit that she makes a picture! But let her be sorry for herself—I'm not!—whatever happens."

"Don't be so unkind! We have nothing against Mrs. Rennie."

"Look here, Laura. I know that things are getting hard for you in station society, because of your intimacy with me, not to speak of anything else. Even the

46 The Song of Surrender

Rennies, in their humble position, might have done something to make your path smooth. Has Mrs. Rennie ever shown you the least countenance?"

"No. Nor have I ever needed anyone's countenance."

"I thought as much. It is for your comfort that I feel—until I can snatch you out of this paltry world altogether! But to smile like a seraph, and silently disapprove of Miss Lowell, and carefully do nothing that can compromise their own precarious position in Residency society, which depends upon the whim of two or three—that is Mrs. Rennie's game. You have not been asked to the Sampsons' this evening to meet the Bishop?"

"I do not mind in the least, I assure you, Amar."

"In truth, it does not matter. The Bishop will probably call on you in a day or two. Such a figure of fun!"

"My father knew him well, or as well as he cared to. I remember how dear daddy used to laugh at him. Why do people laugh so at this poor Bishop?"

"You will see for yourself, Laura. They laugh at him when of sufficient standing themselves; but in Kanhala society they will toady to him finely! One of Lord Lebanon's mistakes."

"Who was Lord Lebanon?"

"He was the silken Viceroy of India, nearly a quarter of a century ago. He betted his eldest son's Oxford tutor, who was this Scotchman, Wedderburn, that the cub would never get his degree: the next vacant Indian bishopric was the stake. The degree was fixed up, and Wedderburn appointed. You do not often find an incompetent Scotchman; but here is one. And for twenty years he has written himself—like his cheek—Francis Bombay! Yet hating the Government religion as I do, I could wish that such a fribble were always appointed!"

Laura was not specially interested.

"If the Bishop calls, must I let him see Uncle Clive?" she asked anxiously. "I feel so troubled about unky."

"You need not be : you heard what Colonel Fendall said just now. But I think you must let the Bishop see Colonel Moor. Meddlesome as a monkey, he will never be content until he has done so. He may even pretend some inter-Governmental commission ; though, indeed, the Bombay Presidency has no control over Kanhala State ! Yes, remember to let his lordship see Colonel Moor without any hesitation. You can help and inspire your uncle, as you know how to do."

"You are quite sure there is nothing seriously wrong with unky ?"

"Quite. Have you not noticed how fond of me he is getting to be ?"

"Yes, indeed. You are kind to him now, Amar dear ! And to think that I once believed there was a serious quarrel between you !"

"Your function in life, dear Laura, is neither thinking nor believing, but loving."

Laura laughed and blushed, but pursued the thought in her mind.

"When can I have some more emeralds, Amar ? You know I'm not a poor girl to be tempted by them. But they *are* so pretty !"

"Toys and vanities, that will win the fairest, buy the wisest !"

"You are the Lord of Emeralds, as well as the Lord of Elephants. Those are dears ; but I prefer the gems—not to wear, necessarily, but to play with. O ! it seems to me too romantic for words, that you should control the emerald market of India ; and to think of your thousands of servants, digging away in your mountain mines, in order that we may play with the gems in the sunlight !"

She momentarily clasped her hands and looked upwards, with a gushing little gurgle, and sigh, just such as might have been used by her English waiting-maid, now serving Mrs. Moor at Wendover, in Worcestershire.

"Thus does the lure work in many minds," said

Au w 8'849

48 The Song of Surrender

Amar Rao, surveying her somewhat sardonically. "It is often pretty to watch. Remember that my emeralds are also sold, making nearly one half part of my income. Yet I believe that you love me for myself as well."

"O do I not! Try me and see, if you never give me another emerald. Yet my uncle no longer objects to my keeping the fourteen which I have."

"Oh, does he not?"

"Not in the least. Isn't he good? and wasn't it silly of him ever to object? I thought it might make trouble between us at one time. But now, do you know, Amar, he will even sit on the floor of my room and play at marbles with those fourteen emeralds, with Radha and little Ruth and myself, in the sun rays! He even says that he would like some more."

"He shall have them. I have promised you more emeralds. In a few days you and your uncle shall come to spend another afternoon with me at the Lakshmi Vilas, and he shall have a dip in the earthenware jar!"

Laura clapped her hands.

"O won't he enjoy it! It is kind and generous of you. You must not think this childish in Uncle Clive; but I like to distract his sad thoughts when possible. In some ways he is more human and tolerant than he used to be."

"He no longer opposes our loves, does he?"

"No; except as he likes to have us both with him. But he seems to have some delusions. Why does he sometimes imagine himself a General, and giving orders in battle to princes?"

"Do not be disturbed. This too shall pass. Colonel Moor believes himself to be his own great ancestor, Lord Clive, who conquered India in the eighteenth century."

Laura's mobile face was troubled.

"I thought that was it. I remember how he admired his ancestor, and aspired to do something as fine in life. It was so sweet of him. But why does he sometimes call you Mir Jaffier?"

"Mir Jaffier was an Indian Prince who gave jewels to Lord Clive."

"Ah, how beautifully that fits in! Unky will be more convinced than ever, after he has played the game of grab. Still, I am sure Mir Jaffier was no such prince of romance as you are. And I don't like illusions."

"Perhaps you are moving in one now. You may meet, at my house, someone who half thinks that he is doing that, and who never enjoyed himself so well in his born days—'moving about in worlds half realised!' India is the land of bewitchment; and he likes it."

"I suppose you mean that Labour M.P.?"

"Charles Hozier, Member of Parliament for Houndsditch."

"What a smelly name! He called at the Residency when he arrived, some weeks ago; but uncle would not see him."

"Therein taking a leaf from the Governor of Ceylon's book; as Mrs. Sampson took a leaf from Colonel Moor's book when she scored by shutting her door to an actual legislator of England, while yearning to receive him. She glows and thrills with the distinction of it still (and will for years); and regrets and rejoices. Meanwhile Beaty Sampson, instead of being able to flirt with Hozier openly, meets him in the hedgerows at gloaming, like any cottage girl in the land which you need never see again."

One of the many qualities which had drawn Laura to Amar Rao was a limited touch of humour, which was more than most natives possess. But in every way, he had taken her imagination by storm.

"Poor Beaty!" she said lightly. "I suppose I shall receive her confidences when she comes to spend a day with me, as she will soon; unless it is all off, because of my social transgressions! But she loves only Washy; as Washy loves only me!"

"Why don't you say Captain Washington?—if you must mention him! I don't like your casual way of

50 The Song of Surrender

referring to many men, though I am aware that it does not signify in English life."

"I will try to please you, Amar; and I only wish to come out of this life into that which you offer me."

"I know it, Laura. It annoyed me to be reminded that Washington, wizened little monkey that he is, dares to admire you; and that your uncle so lately favoured him."

"You need never be afraid of Captain Washington, my Amar!"

"I know that he would never appeal to you. But he vexes me, always hanging about the Residency, on the plea of being Fourth Assistant Resident, though your uncle no longer wants him; and trying to sniff out something wrong."

"It is not that: we know that there is nothing wrong. But he is so eager to serve me, to help. He is very brave and gentle, though insignificant to look at. Uncle Clive loved his spirit, which he used to compare to a clear flame."

"Don't you praise my enemy!" snapped out Amar Rao. "I have an instinct that Washington is, or will be, my enemy. Hozier, now, is a man that I can tackle: I know on what ground to meet him. Though my brother, or his Prime Minister, Moropant, refused to have Hozier as a State guest, thinking thus to please the Supreme Government, I took him in, with his little boy, and am giving him the time of his life. You have seen him at the Club, where I have brought him—no end better looking than your Fourth Sahib. A presentable man; intelligent; and what is more, not a bad fellow."

Laura did not seem interested.

"Anyhow," continued Amar Rao, "I can make use of this Hozier, since he is of low caste. Your British Empire is going to pieces on the Irish shoal. But until that is accomplished, it may be convenient to have a friend in the Imperial Parliament, to ask idiotic

questions by times. He, too, may write a volume, which another Under Secretary of State shall pronounce to be the best book of the year about India."

All this was rather above Laura's head. Amar Rao was not really proficient in the tortuous intrigue in which he delighted: Moropant Ghatgay continually thwarted him at that game, while young Washington had very lately done so. But, in the recent up-look of his affairs, he was more willing than formerly to talk about himself to Laura, who, at least in India, seemed incapable of following a few sentences of intellectual or reasoned thought. The concrete was enough for her; and that she did not always grasp.

"I am regularly fooling Mr. Hozier with my attentions," he said, coming down to her level. "It would amuse you to see how this son of an English carpenter begins to feel himself somebody, and to swell out, yet not unbecomingly. He is like Sancho Panza in Barataria; or the chap in the Arabian Nights. 'The jackal dipped himself in indigo, and thought that he was the peacock.'"

"That is the sort of proverb that would make Ruth squeal with laughter, and clap her little hands," said Laura, waking up.

"Has she told you of the invisible demon, the Bugu, which the people believe that I send to haunt their gentle Maharaja—when he has had too much to drink or smoke?"

"She would not dare to say anything against you before me; just as I know you are too noble to send a Bugu after anyone. But how funny! Hasn't he a shape?"

"Not unless he has lately begun to assume one. This is a private demon entirely, who haunts one poor brain. His birth-place may be a bottle; but he can come through a locked door and say true things to the frightened ruler."

"You frighten me! I think some of the Indian goblins and demons are too deliciously creepy for any-

52 The Song of Surrender

thing. Ruth and her mother have told me the story of the Churel."

"The special Mahar goblin, in these parts."

"Yes. Isn't it too dreadful for anything? The Churel seems to exist only for Mahars: at least she cannot touch others. Ruth and Radha are afraid to go to their own room in the servants' lines, a few hundred yards behind the bungalow, after dark, for fear that the Churel should come down from a tree. That was one reason why I took them into the bungalow."

"A very useful demon for a servile, lazy race."

"Now my little groom, Bahiru, who is as cowardly as a man can well be, is not at all afraid of the Churel. He is a Maratha; and he will go long errands in the dark. But I am as much afraid of her as is Ruth: you know that we are both half Mahars."

"Don't say such things!" growled Amar Rao, setting spurs to his horse.

They had another invigorating gallop of some miles, beneath that sun which would have been death to Europeans. Laura, in her riding, showed the maximum of training, but little special aptitude or pluck.

When they again drew rein, it was ten o'clock, and Kanhala City lay about ten miles behind them. Most of it was out of sight. But clear against the glaring sky shone the grandiose, truncated marble tower between Amar Rao's twin palaces, with the threatening scarlet pennon streaming to the breeze. It always made Laura thrill; and now especially, as she saw how far it dominated.

The passion of the burning day had passed into their hearts. During all this period, in India, there was no principle of resistance in Laura: she had hardly elementary powers of self-defence. Mentally she grovelled in the dust before her lord.

Amar Rao's black eyes were now glowing. His lips and his fingers quivered: his chest heaved. He gazed so admiringly at Laura that, as usual, her violet eyes fell before him, and she began to pant.

They rode slowly, in self-conscious silence, for some

minutes. The character of the countryside was changing. They had left behind them most of the hills, weirdly cut in corkscrew or in battleship formation, which partly engirdle Kanhala ; and were entering upon the sun-scorched yet fertile plain, which, from here, stretches southwards for a hundred miles, over one quarter of the State. They were riding right away from the railway, which ends at the capital city.

It is hard to express the quality, the certain touch, which prevents any part of the Maratha land from being monotonous. There is greenery in the fresh leafage of the trees even when the fields are most parched. The mud-built villages along the road, or further back, were nought, save for an occasional noble well, or a garden of palms. But for true lovers of Maharashtra, as were both these, no landscape can seem alien, or unbeautiful, which shows, even upon the furthest horizon, one of those twisted mountain crests characteristic of the Western Ghats.

It must be admitted that the dust was sometimes suffocating along the splendid trunk road, the work of European engineers, which was obstructed by the abominable bullock carts of the country. This white dust swirled before the incessant breezes which are such a blessing in the Maratha land, and which make it tolerable outdoors even though the air be like a blast from a furnace. Both the riders were lighter clad than Europeans would have been. The heat was not moist or malarial ; perhaps it was not, in that first week of May, excessive by Indian standards ; but it was undoubtedly fine and strong. And these two rode with as good as nothing on their heads.

"How is the dear little Rao Sahib ?" asked Laura, in order to make conversation.

"Thriving exceedingly : his prospects were never before so good. I do not think that the Maharaja any longer contemplates depriving my son of the succession. But may the Bugu take the Maharaja for to-day !"

"Tell me about Quibra," said Laura, after a pause.

54 The Song of Surrender

“Ah, that is more to the point, my Laura. Quibra is the abode of love, as the Lakshmi Vilas of wealth. That is where I shall carry you, a hundred miles on horse-back, by mountain paths impassable in the Monsoon, so soon as I can leave things quite safe behind me in Kanhala. I am glad that you are a fair horsewoman,” surveying critically the dusty habit and the piquant shape; “though I do not care to have women excel in any other than the arts of the house, and of love. I built Quibra specially for you, before I knew you. It lies further south than this; and facing tropical islands, far out in the Indian Ocean, which are a romance in themselves, and which I have lately secured in absolute sovereignty.”

“Oh, what romances you have lived through!” cried Laura, overcome. “Your life must be the life of a god, with such dominion! Yet you love me! But tell me more about Quibra.”

“It stands on a sheer cliff, a thousand feet above the Arabian Sea. That alone removes it, as there is need, into a better air, more resembling that of these uplands. The approach naturally is not easy. Ah, what dreams went to the building of Quibra. My own dreams of love; with reminiscences, I admit, from your foolish writers and artists of Europe. Something of the stately pleasure dome in Xanadu; with Dorè's sky-piercing medieval turrets; and Balzac's gorgeous pirate ships!”

“And all for me!” gasped Laura. “Take me there, O hero of romance!”

“All made perfect for love and for Laura.”

“Have you taken anyone there before?”

“It is my favourite honeymoon resort.”

Laura winced: but only for a moment. She was accepting Indian love as it is.

Amar Rao had at least as many different phases as the moon. It would be blurring to any clear image of him to try to follow up the lurid possibilities occasionally suggested. For the purposes of this narrative, he must be regarded in a single aspect, which was essentially monogamous.

"Is it true," asked Laura, "that you keep airships and flying machines at Quibra?"

"It is. Think of the advantages of the height, for purposes of experimentation. Though not a skilled airman myself, I keep more than one such at the castle, constantly trying new things. I have made lavish use of the mechanic arts there. There is now a lift carrying one right up from the strand to the castle balcony. I aspire to reach my islands some day by flying. How would you like to go sailing through the air with me, little one?"

"I think that I should die with fright at that, Amar."

"Not if I were with you, would you, now?"

He longed to be able to give her the courage and the comfort which the occasion demanded. They had approached a rare, but grateful, *rai*, or grove of shade trees, the corner of which touched the road.

"I want to know, little one," he added, "just what it was that you whispered into Star's ear on the Residency steps. Tell me."

Smiling in confusion, she obeyed.

"I said to him: 'I love Amar Rao.'"

"No, that is not enough. It took you a longer time than to say that."

"There is no eluding you. I whispered: 'I love Amar Rao through thick and thin, through right and wrong, through life and death.'"

She hung her head self-consciously at the words.

"And ever and anon the rosy red
Flashed through her face."

Now this is what has immemorially excited the native of India in love, or to love. It is the power of flushing—the single colour which India lacks—the witching red suffusing the white. The daughters of that continental land have, here and there, every perfection of satin skin and lustrous eyes, of figure or of high-bred feature. But they cannot begin to flush as Laura was now flushing. They merely grow darker if stirred by

56 The Song of Surrender

emotion: even their lips are hardly ever red. It was for their slightly northern fairness that the high-cheeked Mogul women were once admired in India. Kashmiri women, too, were prized for centuries from end to end of India because of the pretty pink which occasionally touches their cheeks, though hardly outside of a Himalayan winter.

"O you beautiful darling!" cried Amar Rao, beyond himself. "You conquer by yielding. I cannot wait any longer."

Quite roughly, he reached out, as if he would have dragged her from her saddle to his own—as a million brides have been won, down to within a century, by the invaders of India. He had never gone so far as this with Laura before. For an instant he held her close to him, pressing upon her cheek several kisses which left blotches on the sensitive skin.

Clinging to her own saddle, and exerting her strength, which was considerable, she broke away from him, in contradiction to the words of both of them. She touched Star with the unaccustomed whip, and he bounded forward. She bent over his neck, and seemed to whisper into his ear.

It may have been in mere feminine contrariness. It may have been the revolt of any remaining spirit of independence and shy maidenhood. It may have been a sudden perception of the gulfs of race and of upbringing still parting her from this lover. Or it may have been just the girlish desire for a splendid lark.

"Not so clever as you think!" she called back to Amar Rao in a new voice of sport and of mockery. "Catch me if you can! Catch me if you are worthy of me!"

And he, startled and baffled, thoroughly discomposed, shouted hoarsely, with oriental lack of restraint:

"O damn you for a trick like that! If I catch you!"

But he could never quite make up the start of a few lengths which she had over him. His lumbering Kabuli did well, and came thundering along the road, to the

peril of passengers: Amar Rao knew how to get every inch of speed out of him. But Laura, without any such equestrian skill, fled as fast. She simply sat tight upon her coal-black steed, who completely entered into the spirit of the race.

Laura's beautiful tawny hair was so abundant that she always had trouble in making it stay at the back of her head. At an early period in the wind of this race, she began to feel it dissolving. Then it came down in one glorious gushing of bronze colour, carrying with it the useless blue hat against which Dr. Fendall had protested. From this moment she fled down the great southern road not unlike a comet, her bright locks streaming behind her at least as nobly as Queen Berenice's. The mere colour of them, dull flame against the blue of her habit, maddened Amar Rao.

Travellers along that road saw that something special was up, and took their precautions. Many bullock carts backed into the ditches. One pedestrian, gazing bemused at his sovereign's brother, was avoided by Laura, but knocked over by Amar Rao, with an oath and a broken shoulder, which was lavishly compensated for later on. Laura, coming to a bullock cart wheeled straight across the road, took it flying like a hedge at home, and was followed by her lover.

For the most part, they raced without serious impediment, through the undistinguished, yet pleasing landscape already indicated. An occasional poor temple, or banyan grove, alone diversified it. Laura sat at ease, with a good grip, enjoying the rush of air past her, and her novel situation of defiance. Amar Rao on the other hand was not happy. He had continually to exert himself not to let the great roan fall still further behind; while he felt himself put upon, badly treated.

Laura who had the lead, kept it easily. From a few lengths, the space between them was extending to a few rods. And that interval the big horse, who was beginning to pant, was not likely to make up.

In India, even less than in Europe, does it pay to

58 The Song of Surrender

take short cuts. Laura twice diverged to her left, across fields which tried her Arab indeed, but the Kabuli still more severely. The uneven ground was baked so hard by the sun that she was each time thankful to be able to rejoin without accident the macadamised high road, which curved somewhat to the eastward, marked by its shade trees. Yet these digressions had increased her advantage. She could hear Amar Rao cursing louder than ever behind her, as the awkward brute stumbled over earthen clods of the hardness of flints.

Ever and again Laura turned upon her pursuer a beaming face, framed in those flying locks until she resembled a personified wind. Her dark blue eyes, matching her dress, sparkled like stars in the North, with a new, mocking light ; and always her complexion whipped his senses.

"Amar Rao, you can't catch me," she cried, with ringing, merry peals of laughter. "You are not a good enough man. I'll have to marry little Washy ; or become a suffragette !"

As Amar Rao was not a European, he had not enough sense of humour to see, except sexually, the picture which she made, or to feel the splendid fun of it all. He could not laugh at himself, or admit himself beaten. He was not used to being outdistanced, or defied even in sport, by a woman. Laura had the better mount, as he well knew ; and he had furnished her with it. He even felt like the stricken eagle, recognising his own feather on the arrow that slays him.

Amar Rao was getting into a monstrous rage at being unable to have his immediate will of Laura. He even began to shout *shivi*, or native abuse, which is always disgraceful.

Nothing that was there suggested the north, save Laura's dancing eyes, her skin and her hair. The white dust of the road, stirred by the pulsating feet of the racing horses, hovered in clouds. Laura rode bare-headed, and her pursuer with but a khaki cap, in the

white rays of that noontide sun which would have slain a European.

For the morning, the forenoon, had been flying. The hour of noon, with the hushed repose which it brings to most created things in India, was near.

There could be no doubt about it, the little half-bred Arab was the better animal. And Star was actually the better for being half-bred, or nearly that. A pure Arab, excelling in speed alone, too delicate for rough work, would have outdistanced the Kabuli more quickly at the beginning. But Star could keep the advantage once gained, being enduring as well as sufficiently swift. Bold interbreeding is an advantage with animals, as with most human races: those who mingle to make the Eurasians alone are called an exception.

"Stop! Once more I tell you——" Amar Rao was shouting, from a flagging steed, drenched with sweat, which was falling quite behind, when Laura made her last divagation. She had not once put her spur to Star, who was still in good form; while the Kabuli was gashed with Amar Rao's merciless spurring.

The high road here meets and crosses the winding Krishna, dwindled, at this season, to a slender thread amid wide sands. Laura had the mind to ride across the thin stream and the half mile of sand. This she did without undue distress to Star. But the Kabuli, further behind, was evidently in trouble.

In the centre of the main stream of the Krishna, which was only about a yard in depth, Laura let Star stand still for a few minutes in the lapping warm waters, though she could not allow him to drink. She stooped and kissed his alert black ear, whispering thanks and encouragement into it.

From the glaring sands behind her came the stertorous breathing of a horse nearly floundered, and a harsh voice:

"If you don't wait for me there, I'll cut your flesh into mince meat with this whip!"

Laura trembled as she heard; but she rode forward

through the stream which hardly looked as if it had the impetus to carry it six hundred miles onwards, to the opposite side of India.

Beyond the sands of the further bank was a bare field ; and beyond that a refreshing grove of greenery. They were now quite apart from the high road. They had covered twenty miles in the two hours since ten o'clock ; and were some thirty miles from Kanhala City.

" Damn you, Muktabai's daughter ! half-caste ! KERANI ! " howled Amar Rao, feeling himself undone, and his ruined horse, worth two thousand rupees, quivering between his knees. " This is too much ! "

And : " Black man ! Nigger ! " Laura allowed herself to sing back.

At that moment, when she had reached the edge of the shaded grove, Amar Rao's Kabuli proved unable to breast the little rise from the sands to the field. His great heart burst with the effort, and the foundered animal fell backward, dead.

CHAPTER V

THE SURRENDER

THIS is not to say that all other Eurasians, or most, or any of them, would have acted as Laura now did. It is merely that one particular Eurasian, Laura Lowell, with her unique personality, did thus act.

She may well have been abnormal in her bewitchment with India, and with her Hindu lover. She had her heredity and her fate, to which she implicitly responded. Her mother, as she had just been reminded, was a retired bazar woman of Tulsipur. Sir Robert Lowell, her undoubted father, if one of the most gifted, had also been one of the most licentious of recent Empire-builders, with a preference for native types of beauty. It was in her blood to think kindly, yearningly of India. Laura had been inflamed and unbalanced by her return to the tropics after twenty-two years of elaborate northern culture, which had gone hardly skin deep.

This Indian lover was one fitted to set any girl a-dreaming. He had personal beauty, valour, and accomplishments, with a romantic position and personality which stirred all that was poetical in her not very intellectual nature. Her spirit had bowed down before him when she met him for one evening at Cowes two years earlier. She had returned to India, against her murdered father's wishes, in order to be near him. It was, if one will have it so, the basest kind of infatuation—Indian blood thicker than water, and breaking bounds!

The process of Laura's dazzlement, during three

62 The Song of Surrender

months in Kanhala, by heroism and by power, by jewels and by jeweled words and eyes, was over. The result remained. She was more than dazzled now. She was dazed—say sun-struck—by one who incarnated, for her, the soul of her loved East, with its raptures and its violences. She was not very young; but she had waited for this. She longed unspeakably to have a master, and such a master! One who was master of an entire subject world besides.

Those who will have it so may say that she was deteriorated, degenerating daily. She was certainly changed, revolutionised, whirled about to the moral antipodes, since the day when her aunt's summons to India had found her in Worcestershire, at the opening of this same year. Her nature was never strong; but took colour charmingly from her surroundings.

Yet her instinct, the real impulse of her being, was towards the voluptuous East, with its life of subjection for women. Modern ideas of womanly dignity and independence have found their way among the three million native Christians of India, and even among the hundred times that population outside the Christian fold. Very many Indian women, not Eurasians, would not have acted altogether as Laura did.

Her few friends in Kanhala, kindly, patient souls, when all is said, did not doubt that she was degenerating rapidly, if unconsciously, beneath the Indian sun, which aroused the hidden evil of her nature; and that she was no longer morally responsible. Her poor uncle, who had been so near deporting her a week ago, thought the same. Captain Washington, with his great, brooding love for her, felt that it was hopeless, if only for the reason that his career lay in India, while the sole salvation for Laura consisted in her being removed, however violently, from the mephitic Eastern atmosphere to the old, still life of Europe, where, perchance, with good luck, the diseased nerve that ever throbbed of India might be appeased. He thought thus, being but a youngster, and, however fine a fellow,

and keen on his job, without that clairvoyant sympathy with native life which had been at once the snare and the success of Sir Robert Lowell.

Let this be said for Laura, that she dared to be herself. She was to experience, in the most unqualified degree and in the most romantic circumstances, what it is to shed Christianity and Europe like a garment which never sat quite easily, and to become again a voluptuous native of India. She had the courage of her preferences, which she pushed to the extreme point. If she threw away her life, she never regretted it.

Laura was no sooner aware, from the increased oaths and shouts of Amar Rao behind her, of the catastrophe to his horse, than she did what she had long had it at heart to do.

She pulled up gentle Star, who was not by any means spent, although his black sides were glossy with sweat. She alighted, feeling never in better condition. The shade of the trees was grateful. Laura had fared better, during the race, than Amar Rao, having had the upper hand, which she was now surrendering. The lark had been carried too far.

Looking back, across the wide field which intervened, she saw that Amar Rao had leaped clear of the dead Kabuli. He stood with folded arms upon the bank, still a soldierly figure, contemplating the horse which he had ridden to death in pursuit of her, and which, though not specially serviceable, had been a favourite. As soon as he saw that she had dismounted, and was looking back, he shook at her the fist containing his hunting crop, shouting:

"Damn you! were you worth the price? A woman's whims! If I don't take it out of you for this!"

He started to stride across the peanut field, which was full of baked clods of earth, nearly the shade of his khaki suit. His head was bowed from weariness, beneath the pitiless sun; but he walked with determination.

Laura was in another atmosphere, in the breezes,

64 The Song of Surrender

which seemed cool by comparison, of the mango grove. She felt some real fear for her white skin. Yet she did not mount, and escape, as could so easily have been done.

Instead, she ungirthed Star's saddle, and set it on the turf, which was just here of a softness and greenness suggesting Kashmir, if not England. She removed the bridle too. Then she petted and embraced Star's head, which showed no sign of extreme weariness. She spoke into his ear :

“ Do you want a song, for the last time ? ”

He whinnied softly in reply, resting his head on her shoulder.

Though a village adjoined, upon the further side of the grove, not a human being was in sight save the approaching figure, dear and terrible, of the indignant lover. Indian birds, with painted wings, flashed among the mango trees. There was no other interruption, in that destined grove beyond the bank of Krishnabai, as the natives lovingly (exactly like the Russians) call the chief river of that region.

Venus should have brought hither, rather than to any cave, chilly under the best of circumstances, hot Dido and her wooden lover. It was the hour of repose, and of noon-day love. Passion breathed from the brazen firmament, from the teeming earth, and in the languorous breezes.

Laura had dreamed and waited overlong for such an hour. She was like a quail, or a peach, ready for the mouth of the epicure.

She looked back, and saw that her lover was still more than half the field away.

Then, as he advanced threateningly upon her, there ensued a remarkable moving picture, and action song.

Laura, standing before her black Arab, caressing him, sang to him, for once, no remembered, but improvised verses, forced from her innermost being by the stress of the critical moment. She stood veiled in the glory of her tawny tresses, which fell for more than a yard

along her habit. Her voice had a penetrating wail in it, her manner a resigned sweetness. She gazed apprehensively over her shoulder, and sometimes trembled. She posed and postured consciously, towards the end, much like a Hindu temple girl, for the benefit of the only human beholder. With a winning glance of triumphant love she fell back, at the last words, into his arms.

LAURA LOWELL'S SONG OF SURRENDER

I.

Star, my fleet horse, that Amar gave,
 Black beauty with the eyes of fire,
 In vain would you my honour save
 Against my treacherous desire.
 With mighty lungs inflated still,
 Cease, and fulfil our Master's will.

2.

Sweet Star, I kiss you on the brow :
 That was our last exulting ride.
 To Amar I belong ; from now
 I am his cloistered Indian bride.
 How through the air we used to go
 Like arrow loosened from the bow !

3.

My English songs you loved to hear ;
 They soothed you when you wanted rest.
 The Raja Amar's rage I fear.
 Nestle your proud head in my breast !
 For jealousy there is no need :
 Farewell, my peerless Arab steed !

4.

Trembling I gaze along the path
 Where I see frowning Amar move
 Like Kamadeva in his wrath,
 God of resistless Indian love.
 My heart is water suddenly :
 Beat me not, Master, lest I die !

5.

Yet beat me hard, that I may feel
 The happiness of being crushed.

The Song of Surrender

Clasp me, your slave, with arms of steel,
 Till every cry of self is hushed.
 Love's vessel, I would gladly be
 Emptied of personality.

6.

How did I mock you even now
 While Star your cumbrous beast outflow :
 "You cannot catch me, Amar Rao :
 I'll have to give myself to you !"
 Forgive me that I laughed, and fled,
 In the last joy of maidenhead.

7.

The heritage of mingled birth
 Perplexes not one steadfast heart.
 I find the East of greater worth,
 And boldly choose my native part.
 From Europe, and the world, I turn,
 And with submissive rapture burn !

8.

Henceforth I seek not to withstand
 The glowing clime's imperious power.
 This is my true, my tropic land,
 And I all Indian from this hour !
 Prince, strongly seize, and carry me
 To Quibra by the Arab Sea.

9.

There fairy pinnacles surround
 (Set high above the sounding main)
 A little space of magic ground,
 A home prepared for lovers twain.
 Lord of this quivering flesh, and soul,
 In you I reach my destined goal.

10.

Griselda was a fractious wife
 To such as I to you shall prove.
 Search, and possess, my inmost life :
 Teach me the Hindu ways of love.
 The dew drop melts into the sea,
 As I in loving utterly !

CHAPTER VI

DEEP AS A SOUP PLATE

"OFTEN and often do I think about the shape that I shall be born under in the next life. Perhaps it will not be in human form at all; I am not anxious that it should be. One thing is certain. In all the former incarnations of my soul, I was probably never a king; nor do I care for the adventure again! Even the mistreated brutes have a better time of it on this earth. Possibly, with good luck, I shall be born next as a holy cow—to be butchered by the *Sahib-lok*, and abused for tough beef! Perchance I shall be a contemplative elephant, the tutelary beast of my unbelieving brother, Amar, who is called Hatipati. I may even be Wagh, the bright tiger of our jungles, condemned, for former crimes, to live always upon other lives; for the ravening beasts, also, are our brethren, souls on their wanderings through this weary universe, and guiltless of what they do. Or I may be born as a bloodless fish, in the dim, slanting world of the cold seas, the *Kala Pani* which washes my coast, and upon which I have always shuddered to look, though my brother and his European cronies sail recklessly over it to *Vilayat*—I would they might stay there! Who knows? I may, for failures in my devotions, be next a bug, a hopping flea, even an infinitely little bacillus, such as is nowadays brought to light beneath the microscope."

It was the same May morning. The speaker was Balwant Rao Banswara, G.C.S.I., Maharaja of Kanhala.

He stood, with his short legs but long body, which made him always appear best when seated, at a

68 The Song of Surrender

window of his undistinguished palace. His ravaged, naturally kind face, which his minister had lately taught to light up with hope, was drooping. The great sad eyes, haunted and haunting, were those of a mystic or of an unsuccessful poet.

At the Maharaja's feet sprawled a brown brat, rather dark, of between two and three. This was his recently adopted son, Prince Rama, by birth the second son of his cousin, the feudatory Raja of Pinzara. Europeans considered the child phenomenally ugly, particularly when contrasted with his recent rival for adoption, the silken little Rao Sahib, with gem-like eyes, Amar Rao's son. But to the Maharaja's yearning heart, Rama represented well-nigh perfection, largely consoling him for the death, three months before, of his own beautiful baby son, Prince Shivaji.

"Cheer up, Maharaja!" came a booming voice across the room. "There's a good time coming for you, even in this life. Things will yet turn out for the best; though I admit that they have been sadly against you hitherto. But it is never too late to mend; or to mend one's luck."

"You have laboured nobly, Moropant, to mend my luck for me; you could have done it, if anyone. But I do not think it can be done."

"Why be so downhearted and miserable, Highness? You make yourself depressed, mooning over the seamy side of things. Why, for instance, should you shudder at the sight of the sea, instead of claiming it as your tutelary element? You are one of the very few Indian rulers so fortunate as to possess an extensive seaboard; the sea furnishes the conch in your coat of arms. The earlier Marathas, to go no further back, sailed boldly over the Arabian Sea, frightening the English in their infant settlement at Bombay; it was one of the tasks of their Lord Clive, who won Pilashi, to dislodge them, very imperfectly. Our Indian seas are by no means cold. Barring the danger from sharks, which is real, you could swim in them to advantage. Ah, the rapture,

which I have a few times had, of diving twenty feet below the surface of the sea, and coming up, holding a wriggling fish in my hand ! Even if such sports be too strong for you now (yet I am making you stronger), there is your own swimming bath, close by, which you never use. At least go there occasionally, Maharaja ; mingle with the Europeans whom you allow to use it. Doctor Sampson, who, as you know, is no friend of mine, is more than twenty years older than your Highness. Yet watch the skill with which he still disports himself in the tepid waters ! ”

“ He is a brave old man, although sold, I fear, to my unscrupulous brother. Yet was he born with a fearless spirit, which was never broken in youth, as was mine. Ah ! I should be more disposed to attend sometimes at the swimming bath, if the Madam Sahibs also frequented it. Mrs. Rennie, now.”

There was a flash of genial understanding between the eyes of the two. Then Balwant Rao's eyes drooped again.

“ So something still interests your Highness in this unworthy life. I am glad to see it.”

The Maharaja's interlocutor was his young Brahmin Prime Minister, Moropant Ghatgay, who was revolutionising the State, and seeking to re-make the ruler. His burly, yet brisk figure stood by the door, becomingly clad in an indeterminate grade of the khaki uniform of Kanhala State ; as Bismarck, to the end of his days, liked to dress as a Prussian major. The heavy usual mask was raised from Moropant's face of brutal power. For once the face looked mobile, eyes responding to stern mouth in a smile charming largely because so rare.

Moropant was exerting himself to cheer and inspire his master before departing for the necessary work of the later forenoon. No longer could he afford, as he had done for more than a month past, to sacrifice the entire golden morning to keeping his ruler from the Hindu priests, from the bottle, or from the little lacquered box of opium. He was bringing the

Maharaja on ; though the work of reformation did not look particularly satisfactory this morning.

Balwant Rao was undoubtedly dilapidated, as well as dreary. Yet was it much that he was on his feet, and fully clad, albeit but in muslin draperies, at this hour, when he was apt either to be closeted at his devotions with the priests who sought to maintain their profitable hold over his conscience, or else to be sodden with opium or liquor.

The Maharaja had fallen back into his mooning melancholy.

"I prefer to discuss the chances of re-birth," he maundered on, saying just what came next into his mind. "Wondrous chain of re-births through eternity ! Sometimes up, sometimes down, like an indefinite series of curves, yet ending never in any Nirvana, as the Buddhists fondly imagine. Our next birth determined by our merits, not merely in the life preceding (that would be something to go upon), but in a complicated way which baffles me, by the accumulated sum of our merits in all the lives preceding ! Nor ever any memory of the life which went before ! What body did this plaintive soul inhabit before it entered the womb of the wife of Vithal Rao, late Maharaja of Kanhala ? He, too, had a bad time of it, as son and as ruler. In the Banswara family, it was only my conquering grandfather who exulted in the regal life ; and, in this generation, Amar, whose spirit may be actually our grandsire's ! Perchance, in an earlier life, I was not thus shivering and afraid. I may once have been an atheist and adventurer, like Amar : that would explain my unhappiness in this life upon the throne. Such subjects are too deep for me. Was I ever a husbandman, toiling in the brown fields ? then I would have been happier than I am ! Can it be that I have ever lived—and I probably have—the life of a woman ? Then, were there but memory, I would be like the only Greek who knew what it was to be both man and woman—I forget the name—of whom you were telling me yesterday, Moropant."

For, as the Christian pietist worries himself over what will befall the same soul in another world, so does the Hindu pietist worry himself and others in the effort to control the fate of his soul when born anew in the same world.

"How would you prefer to be born in the next life, Maharaja?" asked Moropant, humouring him.

"Ah, that is a question, now! If you stop to think of it, the only question in this world worth asking. The Brahmin priests alone can help you to your desires in this matter. That is why I have spent such time and money upon them, practising austerities, and sacrificing both youth and middle age. I fear me that you have done wrong in changing my life, Ghatgay."

"Come, your Highness, we need not return upon that. What life would you prefer for the next birth?"

"Let me think. It is a choice—if I had it!—between two things. Either would I be born a sacred, ruminating cow, or else a Brahmin, worshipped by lower humanity, of powerful mind, apart from the entanglements of rank, yet controlling kings—as do you, my son. Yet, on the whole, I would prefer to be born a cow."

He fixed his bovine eyes upon the Minister, who laughed low, tolerantly.

When considering the Hindu infatuation, their fixed dogma and madness, about cows, one may well have had the thought: If one must adore an animal, and this one, let it pass. But let the worshipped animal at least be such beautiful creatures as pasture in English meadows. One of these, rarely imported to India, is a sight there for sore eyes—a fit tabernacle for Io. It is barely possible to understand the adoration of such a noble animal, specially in contrast to the starved, undersized Indian cattle. But to idealise those—muddled, meagre, half-animate!

"Either a *gai* [cow] I would be born," faltered the Maharaja, "or else a sacred bull, as being male."

In truth, the sleek little Zebu, or Brahminy, bulls,

thrusting their wet black noses unrebuked into the gram baskets of the bazar, are the only cattle well treated in India.

"As a Brahmin, also, I would do well," he continued. "I have lately read that the Brahmins immemorially chose their wives for fairness of complexion, and abundant figure; while the Kshatriyas, who may represent our Marathas, chose theirs as the mothers of warriors."

The partially reformed Maharaja had lately taken to glancing at a weekly Anglo-Indian journal, where so much of ethnology might well have been found. But it was approaching a liberty for him thus to discuss Brahmins before one of the sacred race.

"Or I may have been born, or may yet be born, as one of our English conquerors. In that case I should be white, and my wife would be white, too. How must it seem to have a wife far, far whiter than any Brahmin woman?"

The bemused man was evidently considering re-births in the light of the consorts that they would offer.

"Try it and see, your Highness," said Moropant, brusquely. "I ask nothing better for you. Someone to entertain you harmlessly through the forenoon hours, when I must be at work for your benefit. Several of the sovereign princes of India already have legally married white wives—at least one a Eurasian. I hear no complaints."

"The undertaking is too great for me to contemplate, though it attracts me. It is of a piece with your daring, which may offend the gods ere we are aware. I wonder, Ghatgay, that you have the conscience to be a sportsman, to deprive of their lives even beasts of prey, and to decorate your new house with such trophies."

"I am a Brahmin, and it befits you not, Maharaja, to instruct me as to my duties."

This was a subject upon which the Minister took his own line. His great, shaven jaws fitted to grind up his enemies, and those of the State, closed ominously.

"There is your Brahmin insolence again! I cannot do without a Brahmin Private Secretary, and this one has made himself Diwan for seven years past."

"It has been a good thing for you. Yet I can unmake myself, and shall be only too grateful for my leisure."

"Nay, take it not amiss, Moropant, my son; you know I cannot spare you. But, as touching this great voyage over the Black Water?"

"All in due time, Highness. When your mind is quite ready for such an undertaking, and as soon as I can leave things shipshape behind me in Kanhala, it will be prepared. The Maharaja in England will be a success. Meanwhile, there are dainty white women to beguile your tedium even in Kanhala."

"I know. It was stupid of me to hibernate for so long, without looking upon their faces. White through and through! Out of so few Europeans here, we are lucky that there should be two such beauties as Laura Lowell and Mrs. Rennie."

"The point is, that Miss Lowell is not white through and through, although she is lovely; also, she is earmarked."

"It does not matter; it is Mrs. Rennie who has bewitched me," said the Maharaja, grinning fatuously.

"And now let there be permission to depart," said the Diwan, in the courteous native phrase when one wishes to leave.

"Nay, I cannot let you go yet, after you have been spending entire forenoons with me. I want to tell you what I dreamed last night; perchance you can interpret it."

"Tell on, my liege."

"You know about the Bugu, the invisible goblin, whom my brother sends to persecute me. For some time past I have not heard or felt him. But last night I *saw* him, the invisible!"

"Astonishing! What did he look like?"

"The memory is already dim. It was a long, un-

74 The Song of Surrender

dulating dragon's body, with green scales. But the face—— O what do you suppose the face was? I tell you the truth, Ghatgay, it was the oval face of Mrs. Rennie, seraphically smiling, with those radiant brown eyes which always ravish me. And now, what is the interpretation?"

"This, O Maharaja. That there should be no delay in securing Mrs. Rennie as assistant governess to the little Rani."

"One governess was enough while there were two Ranis to teach. Now, my little Hira having departed to Pinzara, how should two governesses be required to teach the one little maid remaining? They will smell something fishy in the proposal."

"Let them! their nostrils are not of the most delicate. Or let it be as English reader to the younger Maharani, who knows no language save her own sufficient Marathi; or even as reader to yourself! I warrant you would see images in her eyes, eh?"

With a guffaw, the young Minister had laid a massive hand upon the shoulder of Balwant Rao, who quivered and tittered.

"Behold," he went on, "how faithful a servant you have in me. All this is as good as arranged. Rennie Sahib, although he holds his head so high, is walking to a fall. His position here is nought; his superior he makes light of; his associates he despises. His salary is fifteen pounds a month; two hundred and twenty-five rupees, upon which they cannot live. That would be comfortable pay for our countrymen; but is altogether derisory for Sahibs, who are received at the Residency. Therefore have the *sowkars* [moneylenders] found out the Reverend Albert Rennie. He is no more than a morsel to them. Yet did he, until yesterday, owe to four of them a total sum amounting to something over two thousand rupees. He is in a blue funk lest the Bishop find out about this indebtedness, which is forbidden; his associates, the missionaries in trailing robes, are keen to betray him, if they but knew."

"It is a sad position which you indicate, Moropant. Almost could I weep to think of the husband of Rennie Madam Sahib, of the radiant eyes. I wish that I could help him."

"You shall, Maharaja, according to your gentle nature, which wishes harm to no created being. For I have bought up, and at a bargain, all his debts to the usurers."

"You have? Oh, there is no one like you, Ghatgay; no one else so deep! Yet I would not willingly deal harshly with the poor gentleman!"

Balwant Rao, in his excitement, was tightly clasping the Minister's arm: his eyes glowed.

"To-morrow," said the Diwan, "I propose to call upon the Rennies. The debts need not necessarily be mentioned. But I shall suggest, for Mrs. Rennie (who has no more education than to speak straight English), a post of trivial duties, about your person or that of the princess, carrying two hundred rupees a month. Why, it will spell deliverance for them! Of course they will know what we mean; everybody in Kanhala will know. I do not anticipate refusal, though it may take some time to bring everything about. Rennie may have to run the length of his tether yet with his present masters. He is, to some degree, an intellectual man, whose company I enjoy; he is better educated than his associates, and presumes upon the fact. His wife was a gamekeeper's daughter in Vilayat; that is, her father helps to preserve birds, and perhaps deer, to be shot at the right time by his master."

Balwant Rao made up a face at this last picture. Yet, as he realised how complete was the infamous plot laid against the honour of an English household, he tittered anew with delight.

"There is no one like you, my Moropant, for *bringing things about*. That is what I could never do; and my brother, though much cleverer than myself, is a fool at the game compared to you!"

As the two men stood close together, the Brahmin

Minister was perceptibly fairer than his Maratha sovereign. Caste is caste. And, at least for the Bombay Presidency and its southward extension in Kanhala State, this need not be a complicated subject. Three categories will suffice. There are, at the top, the Brahmins, more or less fair, endogamous, divided, even in the Presidency, into not less than two hundred *gotras*, or marriage pens, each marrying only within itself. Then, representing the historic nationality, are the Marathas, with the few kindred castes who are about as good as themselves, though they may not intermarry—*caste people*, all of them, with a great scorn for those below. The out-castes, the so-called depressed classes, with no caste worth mentioning, and in the strictest sense not even Hindus, are pretty base, except for the well-featured Mahars, for whom Christianity has done so much.

If a native is too fair, he is sallow, and uncanny-looking. Many are the vagaries of human coloration. Among the Indian aborigines are some approximating to a granite grey. In a land of cruder combinations, Borneo, are actually tribes of a lemon yellow, variegated by greenish splotches. In contrast to such, or to the repulsive coal-black of the nigger, the dweller in India should be grateful to be surrounded by nothing worse than regular countenances, with quite a dark brown glow upon them when Mahar, a lighter when Maratha, and anything that still remains brown when Brahmin. Brown, after all, is nearer to white than to black. Indians use "black" as a word of reproach; "white" as one of praise and fondness; and have an extreme loathing for negroes.

"Did I not tell you to cheer up, Maharaja? And am I not keeping my promise, to make the end of your life better than the beginning?"

"You are doing so indeed!" sobbed the maudlin ruler, who was not by any means at his best this morning.

When this Prime Minister descended to what Burke

calls "the low pimping politics of a Court," it was, as when he occasionally valeted his sovereign, from no confusion of issues. His aims were, if not noble, at least enlightened, and not merely selfish. He had already wrought wonders for Kanhala State, and for his master's position; he aspired to do still greater wonders, when he had a freer hand. An enthusiastic reformer would have lost his post from the first. Moropant Ghatgay had to advance not as he would, but as he could, in everything allowing for the weaknesses of his master's head and will, and for the prejudices of a decidedly backward people. But he was always as progressive, at a given moment, as it was safe to be.

Within this year he had known vicissitudes, having been banished, and then recalled, stronger than before. His hold upon the Maharaja was due to his really wishing him well, and seeking to bring him into the light, to give him the overdue happiness and recognition. But since the Minister's return, he could be sure of keeping the Maharaja from the stupefaction of drugs and of religion, only at the price of almost continual watching. The slavery of this personal attendance was becoming intolerable, besides being ruinous to work. Moropant sincerely wished to enlarge his master's life and happiness by introducing him to women, and gradually to the wide world. But he also longed for trustworthy help in this weary business of keeping the Maharaja amused through the heated hours between dawn and the noonday sleep. By trustworthy, he meant one who would indulge neither Balwant Rao's devotion nor his debauchery, and who would be impervious to the intrigue against himself, Moropant, which was always in the air. It looked as if Mrs. Rennie would just fill the bill.

"I do not like your appearance, Maharaja," he now said, gravely. "Your eye is furtive; your hand hot and shaky. Are you sure that you are keeping *your* promise to me?"

"What, concerning the *batali* [bottle]? Nay, how can you ask such a question? You insult me, Moropant; let there be good talk, or none at all."

He snickered, and looked downwards.

"That was all I wished to ask. You know the snares and the pitfalls, the old madness awaiting you, if you wander from the path of reasonable reform. But sit down, your Highness; you have stood too long."

He led his master not to any chair or divan, but to the open window, where he forced him to a cross-legged position on the floor.

"You should not lie down so early in the day," said Moropant. "But look forth at your city, and at Krishnabai, and consider the things that we have been discussing. Nurse this little prince, who has brought such joy to your heart. And now let there finally be permission [to depart]."

He had pushed into the arms of the Maharaja the brat at his feet, who had remained impassive all this while, a little graven image, after the fashion of native children, who can usually be trusted to stay where they are put.

"The things discussed are nothing to the things remaining to be discussed. Desert me not like this, O Moropant! Or, if you do, who knows what influence may creep in behind you?"

"Is it even so? I feared as much," said Moropant, looking down sharply at his sovereign on the floor, his jaw growing grim. "My shoulders are broad, but they are sometimes wearied, as to-day. What can one man do?"

"He can do much, if his name is Moropant Ghatgay. Are you not the best friend I have had? Nay, I was but jesting, it was nought. Tell me, do you think I shall get the G.C.I.E. by the New Year?"

"That is still a long way off. But I think it highly likely that you will—if you do not monkey with the jig saw when in motion. 'There is nothing'—quoting—"so terrible as ignorance in action.'"

"Ignorance is myself. I ought to know it well, after the muddle I made of my reign during your entire lifetime, until you came to my rescue. I remember how nobly you refused the C.I.E. the other day, saying that it did not become you to wear the lowest grade of that knightly order, the highest grade of which was still withheld from your gracious master. Well said, my son! It must have produced a good impression upon Colonel Moor. He is a good man, and my friend. I grieve to hear that he is confined to the Residency for a week past."

"He is, indeed, obscured, and not likely to stir forth for the present," said Moropant.

An observer might have noticed, but the Maharaja on the floor did not notice, that he spoke cryptically, and grew a shade darker. This was, to him, a grievous topic, pregnant with possible dangers. Balwant Rao was not in touch with life outside the palace; and thus did not know what was being so widely bruited among his subjects.

"I trust that no misfortune is maturing against us," continued Moropant gravely. "Anyhow our hands are clean in the matter. But it will take good seamanship to weather the capes that are before us, if we are to reach the desired haven with the final restoration of all your ruling powers, and perhaps the decoration, by the end of the year. Above all, there must be no impulsive action."

"You alone can manage my ship for me; though I do not like these sea metaphors. It was at my Feast that I last saw Colonel Moor, who sat beside me."

"So much the worse."

"What do you mean? He looked so well! There is a high caste Sahib for you. But what is this Home Rule that I hear so much about? Many hope that it will prove the destruction of England. Is it true, that all the people of good caste there, are being put below the feet of the low castes? And if so, how can they continue to govern India?"

80 The Song of Surrender

“Trouble not your brains with Home Rule, Maharaja : they will grow addled in the process of trying to understand. Even I know not what to make of it, not having yet sailed beyond India. I have had to do the duties that lay nearest to me ; and those were towards your Highness.”

“I know they were,”—gratefully. “Yet is it rumoured that a low-caste England will be no longer worth obeying.”

“Hush ! My liege, if you wish to avoid being washed into the weltering waves, keep your feet firmly upon the impregnable rock of loyalty to the British connection, where I have so painfully planted them.”

“I will, I will, Ghatgay ! You frighten me when you use that voice, and glare at me so ! ”

“It is better to be frightened into loyalty than not to be loyal at all, like your brother—a vessel for destruction ! You know that I have to go to Guzerat, leaving three mornings hence, to meet the Viceroy, in the matter of the five murderers who have been sentenced to death. That is the ostensible purpose of my visit : but I ought to be able to do much, besides, to further your interests. Let me feel that things are safe behind me at Kanhala during my absence, which may even extend to ten days.”

“They shall be. Where would I be without you ? This precious infant, now, my Ramya—it was through you that the adoption was made possible.”

Moropant stooped down and patted the shaven head of the naked boy.

The names of these two were connected in popular gossip throughout the Peninsula. For long it was whispered that Moropant, after having taken some lakhs of rupees from the Raja of Pinzara to secure the adoption of this child instead of Amar Rao's son, the Rao Sahib, had stuck to the money when it looked as if he could not carry out the bond. But he had sent the Raja, who was so like a Chinese joss, back to his mountains rejoicing, having obtained not only the

adoption for his second son, but the hand of the Maharaja's elder daughter, the Princess Hira, or Diamond, aged ten, for himself: there were wheels within wheels, which would never be disentangled.

"It is much," continued Balwant Rao, "to have this dear as mine own, for all household and religious purposes. He shall light my funeral pyre, and my soul shall ascend to Swarga—till the next birth. But I would I could think of Ramya as succeeding me upon the throne of my mighty grandfather, Tannaji Banswara. It is hard to think that the little Rao Sahib, whom I never could love, try as I might, should be the next Maharaja."

"That is doubtless how the succession stands at present. The Rao Sahib is supposed to have a vested right, of which the Supreme Government is the guardian, and with which we must be careful not to interfere. It is much that we were able to exclude him from the family adoption. The rest may conceivably be accomplished later; yet not for long years. For instance, I would not dare to mention the subject to his Excellency next week. Enjoy the little son whom you have obtained ready-made. But any step beyond that would bring down upon us the severe displeasure of the Supreme Government. It would be playing into Amar Rao's hands: it might well be as much as your *gadi* is worth!"

"Of course, of course. But do not go hundreds of miles away, Ghatgay, to meet the Viceroy in Guzerat. The State and I cannot spare you for ten days."

"If I cannot leave the State for ten days, how shall I ever be able to take you on adventures to England—and, who knows? possibly among the white girls of Russia!"

"To be sure; I had not thought of that."

"So again: cheer up, Maharaja! I wish I could give you a higher opinion of your deserts, a better conceit of yourself."

"What must it be to be in a land where every

82 The Song of Surrender

woman is white ! But will they not despise me, as even the few ladies at the Club here seem to do ? ”

“ Nonsense, your Highness ! ”

“ The hearts of brown men are towards white women everywhere. But does it act the other way ? I say, Ghatgay, do you remember taking me to Bombay at Natal [Christmas] to see Maud Allan dance ? She was not nearly so unclad as I fondly counted on seeing her ; it was more like the posturing of our own dancing girls. But why did the Bishop walk out of the room so stiffly at the beginning of the performance, with his niece upon his arm ? ”

“ To assert himself, I suppose ; or because he was disappointed. You wait until I can take you to some of the London shows ! ”

“ Tee-hee-hee ! You quite liven me up, Ghatgay. Then you think that I need not be afraid of all white women despising me ? ”

“ Who ever heard of such a thing ? Anglo-Indian women who are so few, who meet few natives save those of the servile class, and who are sometimes much set up at occupying a better position out here than was ever theirs in Vilayat, may indeed seem to countenance that scorn for native men as such. But white women have also known passions for Asiatics : you need not look beyond your brother's gate for an apparent example. As your Highness has heard, an Englishwoman has become a geisha in Japan. She will not be the last ; they like it. Chinese are considered specially desirable husbands by European women of a certain grade. Read, if the chance ever offers, the letters to Tantia Topi, who was Nana Sahib's agent in London—not that I would countenance disloyalty in any shape. But you will there see how some of the finest and the fairest English ladies of sixty years ago flung themselves, in stark infatuation, at Tantia's feet.”

“ May I have equal luck ! I declare, you quite hearten me.”

“ Our methods will have to be different. Meanwhile,

to give you harmless practice, there is Mrs. Rennie close by."

"You think that you can persuade them?"

"In a moderate time, if not at once. And I do not wish to keep you from the society of your legitimate wives."

"Ah, yes. And you say, as a Brahmin, that it is my duty to the gods to rouse myself in my latter years?"

"Which shall be your best. I have told you so fifty times, your Highness. Shiva is the god of love as well as of death: otherwise, he would not have such a hold upon the people. But now for permission!"

In answer to a nod he slipped, with a respectful salaam, out of the room; out of the palace, where he was quite unable to introduce the order which he was bringing into the State; and into the two thousand guinea motor which awaited him.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAHARANI SITARA

MOROPANT had no sooner left the premises, than a youthful female figure tripped, on bare feet, with a slight musical clashing of bangles, "gliding to revenge," into the bare room where the Maharaja sat melancholy at the window.

She had every right to enter, being a wife. She had not the stately beauty of the elder Maharani, Indravati, the mother of the baby prince lately dead, and of the two little girls. At this moment she seemed to be unpleasantly misshapen in the region of the chest.

"Who told you to come here, Sitara?" her husband inquired sharply.

"I told myself," she answered giggling.

"Behold how I am insulted by my own household!" he moaned.

"Nay, Maharaja, let there be pardon; I meant it not unkindly. I saw that you needed cheering up. Behold what I have smuggled in; there is another for the morrow."

Proudly, self-consciously, she extracted from her tight breast-jacket the neck of a bottle of Highland whisky.

"Now blessings on you, Sitara!" he answered, reaching out one hand. "You have brought me my best friend. The English have given this gift to India; therefore am I their servant forever. I cannot get through the forenoon without some form of intoxication."

"No more you can," she said sympathetically. "Who could expect you to?"

"Give me the *batali*. We serve the gods by making use of their gifts."

When her burden was removed, she was seen to have a graceful, though not full, figure.

The cork had previously been loosened in the bottle. Sitara had with her a metal cup, which she filled. The Maharaja guzzled at it noisily.

"Ah, that puts into me the heart which my mother failed to do at my birth. Another, my pet!"

Sitara stood awkwardly before her lord, serving him even unto the fourth small cupful.

She was not pretty, yet not uncomely, with a fresh face, never awakened. She was about twenty. Sitara had been a village Maratha maiden, the daughter of a farmer, chosen to this great alliance, at an age beyond the usual, because some horoscope gave hope that she would furnish an heir to the sonless ruler. Yet she had not done so. She was in semi-disgrace on this account; for nothing less than a stigma rests upon the childless Indian wife. The fault was universally laid to her, and not to the Maharaja.

Sitara, like the elder consort, with whom she got along excellently, had the designation of Maharani; while the little daughters were called Ranis. The first half of the full word means "great." Balwant Rao was the only Maharaja, as well as the only rightful Highness, in his dominions. But his brother, and the various feudatory rulers depending upon Kanhala State, bore the lesser title of Raja.

"You are a good girl," said the grateful monarch. "Sit down."

She sat, with some *gaucherie*, cross-legged upon the floor, opposite him. She was inclined to giggle anew at so much success. Yet she was not a bad little sort. Unlike the elder Maharani, who was so completely under the influence of the Prime Minister as to give rise to the very worst interpretations, Sitara inclined to the opposite camp in State politics, so far as it mattered at all what she thought.

Moropant was so little sure of her hostility that he hesitated in the delicate matter of taking a stand against

86 The Song of Surrender

her. She might help entertain the vacuous Maharaja innocently, that is, without intrigue. While Indravati knew some English, and profited in various ways from the society of Miss Walpole, the prized governess to the little Ranis, the luckless sister wife could not even read in her own tongue. In most native minds it was counted to the Maharaja as a proof of merit, and almost of sanctity, that he kept but these two wives, with his unlimited opportunities.

"Let not the Diwan Sahib know of this," Sitara ventured.

"It would be as well not to," Balwant Rao agreed.

"He is a great and an oppressive master. He leads you, O Maharaja, by the nose."

"Let him lead me anyhow, so long as it be to success and to happiness!"

"Do you know what the people call him?"

"No; nor do I much care to."

"They call him your keeper, referring to the houses of mad folk; and also your bear-leader."

Her heart was in her throat at such boldness. But Balwant Rao seemed more inclined to weep than to resent anything.

"Who has put you up to say such things, which pertain not to women?" he asked, lifting to her his dark tragic eyes.

Glibly she mentioned three or four State officials. These were not by any means enemies, nor dependants of the Raja Amar Rao, but subordinates and supposed friends of Moropant's—distinctly, dwellers in his camp. Sitara had been well primed. There is no real seclusion of Maratha women, though it is sometimes affected in ruling families.

"It will be a relief to have Moropantrao far away in Guzerat for eight or ten days," Sitara added.

There is a difference, not always clearly marked, between those who bear the *rao* as a separate word and an integral part of their names, and those to whose names it is appended as an honorific.

"In truth it will be a relief, in some respects. But abuse not the man who has done everything for me."

"Other good men would have done as much, and less masterfully. He treats you not as a monarch, but as a slave. Behold, during our holiday I will bring *daru* to you daily."

"Moropantrao guards me for my good. Perhaps he is a little authoritative in his methods. He does not enough recognise that I cannot live without the divine drink. But you, my Sitara, beloved younger wife, are a darling! I believe that you do care for the old man, after all. Here, drink this."

He had pulled her towards him, caressing her. Then, still leering, he filled the little cup for her with the raw spirit. Thus do bad habits begin.

Sitara's eyes were moist after she had swallowed the dram. She was inclined to be maudlin; but held clearly to her point.

She drew into her arms the ugly child of adoption, Prince Rama, whom both the Maharanis petted. He stared about him with stupid eyes. Very soon, however it was managed, she was weeping genuine tears over him.

"Why weep you, my Sitara?"

"To think that I have no little son like this. Yet is Ramya, here, altogether as mine own. I weep to think that you are old, my master. When you are Swargwasi, what will be our condition? What lives shall Ramya and I any longer have, worth living? Who will protect us—and the elder Maharani? For we shall need a protector. This adoption has been only for household purposes, and during your lifetime. As at present arranged, everything flies to pieces the moment you are gone. Amar Rao's son, that odious brat, becomes Maharaja. Nothing is settled. Perhaps Amar Rao himself, who hates us one and all, will take the *gadi*. *Ai! ai! ai!* It is a *katcha*, bad arrangement. It was oppressive of the British Raj to force it upon us. Therefore do I weep because our protector is

88 The Song of Surrender

old, and because our little son may be slain at a moment's notice!"

Balwant Rao grew owlishly solemn, trying to comfort his young wife.

"Nay, take not on so. The British Raj is just, and will not suffer such things as you suggest—far be the omen. Yet do I wish that I could have proclaimed Ramya heir to the State, and successor. Such was my desire. But Ghatgay withheld me, alleging the certain wrath of the English, and the claims of the Rao Sahib. Yet say not so lightly that I am old. After all, I am but fifty-four."

That seems a much greater age in India than in Europe; just as it would have seemed, in about an equal degree, a much greater one in the Europe of the Middle Ages. That is one of the grievous facts about life in India, coming ever with a fresh shock to those who live in the land and are attached to the people—the early age at which it is naturally snuffed out, from hardness of conditions, or from mere failure of vitality. One is always losing friends prematurely. The average duration of life is quite incredibly short. Even among the comfortable classes (specially in this part of India, and southwards) life seems to faint and flag in natives from about the age of forty-five: it has not frequently power to carry one on much beyond fifty. "And theirs are lesser lives than ours."

"My maternal grandfather, in my village," said Sitara, "is less old than you are, kind master. I did not wish to discourage you. Yet must we look to the future. It is not yet too late to do that which you suggested and desired."

"What? To proclaim our Ramya heir to the throne?"

She gave him a nod of much intelligence, as she spat out the red juice from the *pan-supar* which she was chewing.

"Hush! It must not be spoken of. It may be as much as my *gadi* is worth."

"Not a bit of it! It would assure the succession; and would be a measure popular with your subjects, who honour you for your gentleness and your religious merits, while they distrust the unorthodox Amar Rao. Then think what a blow it would be to him!"

"The Diwan Sahib tells me to the contrary; and that it would be playing into my brother's hands."

"To set his son aside from all chance of succession? A blind man could walk along this road."

"I begin to see. It is my heart's desire, if I but dared!"

"We will all give you daring. Only it were well that this were done while Moropantrao is in Guzerat, shooting lions, perchance, with his friend the Viceroy."

"He goes to take animal life, does he? I always disapproved of that trait in him."

"He has been offered big shooting there: else why should he stay away so long? But it is all the better for us."

"You forget the Residency, set as a kennel of watchdogs in our midst."

"They never loved to interfere in our internal affairs; and now less than ever! But consider how the bulky Diwan Sahib stands between you and your people, O Maharaja, obscuring you, and hiding from you all that passes. Now is our opportunity; and you know nothing of it. Why do you suppose that the Resident Sahib is secluded and ill?"

"In truth, I cannot dream the reason."

"Many of our people have seen him. There is no doubt about it. The remotest village buzzes with the news. Only these fool English know not our land, and peer about idly for the cause."

"What is it, woman?"

"POUST."

The effect was greater than Sitara had anticipated.

With a bitter cry, the kindly ruler threw his head violently back against the woodwork of the wall. He beat his bosom and tore at it. He arose and paced to

and fro ; but this made him dizzy after the liquor. Then he sat down again, sobbing loudly and unrestrainedly.

Sitara tried to hang upon him, and to comfort him. But when her advances were repulsed, she again sat upon the floor unconcernedly, watching him with a curious intentness. She cracked all her fingers until they would crack no longer. Then she began cracking her toes ; but this process was obstructed by certain huge gold toe-rings.

At last the Maharaja began to be articulate again.

"Colonel Moor was my friend. While he was a man, he was a good Resident, long-suffering and just, not proud, though by nature hot-tempered. And it was at my Feast that this horror must have happened ! While he sat at my right hand, poor, poor man ! Who can have done the infamy ? "

"There was the Christian servant, Gaspar, once in the palace service for European guests, who waited behind the Resident Sahib that night, as my master may remember. He had been savagely beaten and kicked by the Colonel Sahib for no more than this trivial offence of the *batali*, and had sworn vengeance. Anyhow, he has now vanished like the morning dew, without trace left in the Maharaja's dominions."

"Gaspar ! I seem to remember a tubby little man, who spilled a tray into the Vicereine's lap, two years ago, did he not ? who was dismissed ; and who long petitioned me for arrears of pay. But he was surely incapable of such crime."

"I know not, master. But he has drawn the guilt to himself by fleeing."

"I dread lest the guilt, or the suspicion, may rest at our door, ill-omened ! I see what Moropant meant now by capes to weather, and misfortune maturing against us. I would that for five crores of rupees, or for my patrimony, which has brought me small happiness, this thing had not happened. It seems to me altogether like one of the subtleties of my brother Amar."

"Perhaps it is. But consider the god-given oppor-

tunity for next week. Think of this infant's interests. Assert yourself, and the claim of the elder line—the right of adoption, which is a part of our religion. The Diwan Sahib will be away, the Resident Sahib is as if he were not ; there are none to watch us.”

“What? Not the Stunt Sahibs [Assistant Residents]?”

“Consider how the gods have provided for us. The first Sahib is with his wife at Mahableshwar, eating the cool air. The second Sahib is on duty somewhere afar, it matters not where. The third Sahib dwells always at Pinzara, beyond the Ghats. There remains only the Chota Sahib, Captain Washington, who is but a *batcha*, and does not count. Besides, he comes from the Punjab, and knows not Marathi.”

She further expounded, with facility, how the Residency was betrayed, unmanned, at the mercy of its foes.

“I do not much like profiting from such a state of things,” said the Maharaja, who had many right feelings. “Colonel Moor would be very angry, could he know—alas!”

Sitara poured whisky for her husband ; and then, without being asked, for herself. She deftly handled the various threads of the intrigue. It seemed to be aimed, above all things, against Amar Rao. If he secretly directed it, then was it certainly his masterpiece hitherto.

“But have we instruments who can bring all this about in the Diwan's absence?” asked the muddled Maharaja, further worn by the news he had heard.

“Of course we have. My master is weary. Lay this poor old head upon my lap, and listen. But above all, not a word to Moropantrao, or he will grind us between those great jaws of his.”

“You make me shudder. Not a word! Kiss me, my Sitara!”

CHAPTER VIII

THE SWIMMING BATH

"Do you know, I understand that Eurasians have a trick of growing darker as they grow older. Awfully rough on the poor beggars—or on those who have married 'em."

"I'll tell you a trick to match that," came another voice, self-confident, metallic. "Unlike ourselves, they are apt to be darker—oh, whole shades nearer to black—in the body than in the face."

"Oh, come now, Rennie! What do you know about it?"

"Quite enough. But I wasn't aware of this engaging trait until my recent visit to Ceylon, where my father, as you know, is an Evangelical missionary. During a month I had surf bathing almost daily, often in the company of certain Eurasians. The trait is unmistakable, I assure you."

He took a header as he spoke, into the glimmering, dim, tempting waters. He came up again, with a little toss of the head: then his gleaming shoulders, approaching the athletic in width, showed as he clove the water deliciously, from end to end of the swimming bath, which was some sixty feet in length.

Albert Rennie presented a certain smart appearance even in his skin. In fact, he was too smart all round; and his cock-sureness was to bring him a cropper. He had alert, small eyes, of the same colour as his wife's renowned ones.

Though he still held his own in Residency society, all did not care for him, even there. Some esteemed him

to be smug ; a bit of a driver (and were even sorry for Mrs. Rennie); inclined to be cheeky ; and too fond of administering little electric shocks with his Cambridge Liberalism.

"I suppose it must be so," the first speaker commented, in the void. "What do you say, Dr. Sampson?"

He addressed a vast and vigorous old man of seventy-five, and of nearly twenty stone, whose head and face were a bristling thicket of white hair, continued all over his body, and betokening his enduring vitality.

"I daresay," he remarked nonchalantly. "I've not had much to do with Eurasians, I'm thankful to say."

This was allowed to pass ; though it was a known fact, not to be mentioned, though often alluded to jocosely, that Dr. Sampson had a Eurasian step-son, to whom he had shown the greatest kindness.

"What a disillusionment for anyone who may marry a white Eurasian on the strength of her face ; though it does not always appear in evening dress."

The allusion was plain. The Residency was a good deal in the air these days. Yet it was too decent a little company there gathered to mention a woman's name among mere males.

"But what is the matter with Colonel Moor, that we cannot set eyes on him anywhere? And what is there wrong at the Residency? Can you tell us, Dr. Sampson?"

"Don't ask me!" he answered gruffly, in a voice like the bellow of a bull. "I am not allowed to interest myself in the Residency. There is my superior officer, the Residency Surgeon : ask him."

There, to be sure, wallowing in the refreshing waters close by, was the envied officer, looking much like any less favoured mortal.

"Fendall! Fendall! You must really tell us the news. Don't keep it up your sleeve any longer."

"I haven't a sleeve to keep it in," he answered,

94 The Song of Surrender

laughing; "yet quite as much as is needed for the purpose. You are after a mare's nest, I assure you."

Colonel Fendall, a man of exactly two-thirds the age of his nominal subordinate, showed much good feeling in managing the fierce susceptibilities of Dr. Gregory Sampson, Durbar Physician in Kanhala State, who could never yet get translated into the Residency Surgeon; though he could have done those duties, as he often explained, with the little finger of his left hand; and though he had been, for a generation past, welcomed in Residency society. The difference was one of academic degrees, and of early start: yet in this case the unqualified man was the one who had some of the divine gifts of healing.

So Fendall amiably explained that Colonel Moor was merely done up, but as right as rain if the truth were only known; that he had seen him only two hours before, forbidding any anxiety on his account; and that all was for the best in the best of Native States.

It was between ten and eleven, on the same May morning, in the Maharaja's swimming baths, close outside the native city. Balwant Rao never used these baths. But by his courtesy the Europeans in Kanhala, at least those of Club rank, including missionaries of all sorts, had the unrestricted use of them. Here was every apparatus and comfort. Most of the men entitled to do so would gather there sooner or later in the forenoon.

The water, twelve feet deep, was automatically renewed without cessation. Though not cool, it was refreshing—so infinitely refreshing that certain worn ones could not have faced the long and burning days without this indulgence, or rather necessity, at the beginning. After a night often of discomfort, this was physically the one bright spot in the day, which alone made the remaining twenty-three hours possible.

There were now, at a somewhat late hour, six or eight men present. All could swim, with the exception of one man who, with a life preserver under his arms,

floated and paddled about in extreme appreciation of his surroundings. There was a special watery reflection, in addition to the natural dimness of the building.

Rennie found himself, at the lower end, next to an American missionary, of well-nigh Dr. Sampson's age, who was honoured by all, but who seldom frequented secular society.

He was stately in build, though a little bent; with a flowing beard, scarcely touched with grey; and a beautiful, regular, calm face, not intellectual.

"So your Bishop is in Kanhala, Mr. Rennie?" he courteously remarked.

"Not my Bishop!" Rennie answered jauntily. "I hold by him hardly more than you do. My orders are independent of him; and I laugh at his apostolic succession."

Rennie, with these sentiments, incongruously belonged to the Ritualist Mission, under the immediate thumb of the Bishop. He himself could least of all have told how he arrived there—which was not for the happiness of anyone. But he held himself, University-bred, to be of another clay from his under-educated associates; while his Home orders gave him security. His head had been turned by his easy admission, chiefly on account of his wife's looks, into the Residency gang, where no other missionary penetrated.

There was something decidedly not becoming in his tone. The aged missionary gazed at him doubtfully, disapprovingly, from clear hazel eyes.

"The iron band of the episcopacy!" he mused. "That is a fact, and to my mind a regretful fact, which runs through church history. We would not allow it to fetter our freedom in Christ. I long hoped that you might be one of us in sentiment. But I do not think you will escape running up against the iron."

"The iron in my soul, eh? But I tell you I am on the best of terms with the Bishop."

"It is then that he is most liable to kick—a spurious good fellow! I do not think he means to be dishonest.

But there is a peculiar twist in his understanding which makes it very dangerous to have dealings with him. We have experienced this in inter-mission transactions. I would not be unjust to Francis Wedderburn, whom I knew as a boy out here ; his father, Major Wedderburn, was a good Presbyterian brother, who used to attend our prayer meetings. But the son thought he knew a better way ; and it has led him to high place. His character has been ruined by his early promotion. Flattery is now as necessary to him as is air to a pneumatic tyre. If only he would be content to do nothing ; but he has a disease for strong action at incalculable times ! When I consider the cause that he has given to the enemies of Christ to blaspheme ! That man's whole life is a sort of consolation to me in my poor little circumstances ; I would not act his part one month for twice his estate. Forgive me if I have spoken too plainly ; but I thought you needed a friendly warning."

The venerable man, who was not much of a talker, had spoken without any bitterness, in a low, musical voice, with a careful choice of words which came from a charming personality.

"I am obliged to you," said Rennie, remembering that this missionary was a good deal older than his father. "Yet I do not think that I am in any danger."

"I sincerely hope not ; you know that I wish you well."

They were both standing up out of the water, leaning with one arm on the parapet. While smiling good-bye with clear eyes, but with a mouth which expressed conviction, the old man went through a little pantomime which Rennie never forgot.

He merely pressed his upraised thumb decisively downwards, in the action of crushing a noxious insect.

The Bishop's Thumb !

The whole had been quiet, and apart.

One could not linger even in this water for more than about half an hour without getting chilled. Several of

the swimmers including Dr. Sampson were preparing to depart.

There arose a little cry :

“Sampson! Dr. Sampson! You must not go without giving us your little show. The sitting jump!”

The treat of the baths was to see Dr. Sampson perform, when he occasionally turned up. Despite his great age, and his obesity, he was in admirable training. One unique trick, that with which he now proceeded to oblige, he could exhibit with all the finish of a work of art.

Hirsute all over, as well as voluminously bearded, he seated himself cross-legged, with folded arms, on a little platform at the upper end of the building, about a dozen feet above the water, looking the very image of some plump Eastern deity, though not smooth enough for a Buddha. Then, by some muscular effort the habit of which he had acquired in youth, without relaxing a line in the statuesque pose of trunk and of limbs, he projected himself from the edge of the platform. Still in that pose of a Buddha, his toes tucked under him, he descended majestically through the air, striking the water with a great splash, and ever smiling beatifically.

It was highly effective. It could not have been better done ; and was greeted with applause by the few spectators, as always.

CHAPTER IX

A COUNTRY-BRED FAMILY

MRS. SAMPSON had been called away five times that forenoon, in connection with the dinner that was on for the evening, from her special padded chair in the north-west veranda, which was furnished, enclosed with morning glories trained over the trellis, until it was like a room for the earlier half of the day. At sixty-five she fully realised, as she settled back once more, that one must be sparing of breath and of temper on a trying day in India.

"I declare," she mildly protested; "what a trouble these new servants are! When all is said, they are no more than small change, dishonestly counted, for Gaspar: I feel cheated. How I miss that dear man at every moment of the day! He would not keep coming after one; but he would *do* things. He had resource—if a little too much at times! But my system seemed to be working admirably with him. O what can have happened to Gaspar? He may be on the tear of his life. But nothing can persuade me that he has poisoned Colonel Moor. It was not in the little man."

"It's a pretty emphatic case of Gaspar *nahi*, isn't it, mummy?" said Beatrix Sampson. "*There is no Gaspar!* Do you remember Laura's first dinner at the Residency? and the evening when you confiscated his key?"

"I believe that he was attached to me after all. I did not seek to reform him altogether, which would have been against nature. But I made sure of keeping him in working order with the allowance of one out-

break, duly canalised, per week. The comfort that man was to me—though I never allowed him to get the upper hand, as the poor colonel did. Such a superior table hand: the Bishop would have appreciated him to-night! Besides, it looks so bad for him to disappear just as this thing has happened to Colonel Moor. The evil-minded might think that he had done it."

"They will certainly think so. But the poisoning itself is such a big and lurid fact that I cannot get focussed to it. O the poor, dear colonel! He was always good and kind to us."

"There is only one opinion about Clive Moor. For his sake, I wish that we could have asked Laura for to-night. But we must draw the line somewhere."

"We certainly must," Beatrix assented with decision.

"It goes to my heart to have to leave Laura out for the first time. The Raja Amar Rao is our friend—a Prince by nature and by birth. But the way he carries on with Laura is utterly too too!"

"Too utterly, isn't it?"

"Besides, you wouldn't have a chance with Captain Washington if Laura were present. We must look out for you, Beaty darling. You shall have your innings to-night. There will not be any other young and attractive woman except Mrs. Rennie, whom your father will monopolise."

Opinions might have varied as to how young and attractive Beaty Sampson was. She still kept a certain swing, a certain force of hard youthful femininity, at twenty-five, after several hot seasons on the plains. She was younger than Laura, if older than Mrs Rennie.

Beaty had round eyes which glittered like green marbles. She held herself well, enjoyed tough health, dressed well and expensively. She spoke correctly—more infallibly so than her mother, since she had been educated in England. Dashing in regard to games and the like, she took pains, as a rule, to behave with strict propriety.

In so distant a station as Kanhala Beaty might even

100 The Song of Surrender

be allowed to pass for attractive. But she was not in the first class, and not in any good second class, for looks, whether one considered height, figure, complexion, or feature.

It was a station jest that Beaty Sampson *must* marry someone of officer's rank—at least a subaltern. So she must: the vital need for it could not well be exaggerated. But her chances were crumbling with the years. Young Washington, with his local grade of captain, was the nearest approach to a subaltern in a radius of a hundred miles. O how desperately she and her family wanted him!

There was the more need that Beaty should do well since the tragi-comic misfortune of the still dearly loved elder sister; for this was a family of warm affections, and mutual loyalty. Minnie Sampson had married an amorous missionary of the Ritualist, rightly called the St. Augustine's, Mission. That might have passed: it was a love match. The Sampsons, being firm Churchpeople, comfortably placed, and indulgent parents, tried hard to make it pass current. All would have been well but for the adjective, and the incongruous trait, connected with that missionary.

The Reverend Stephen Jackson, amid a resounding scandal, had been cleverly caught out in his weakness, in the matter of a native girl, some four years earlier, by the very Bishop already mentioned. Exhibiting a true repentance, and also in deference to his connection with the Sampsons, Jackson was allowed to retain his priestly status by doing long penance in a Scottish slum. Mrs. Jackson stood by her husband; she was more safely a good sort than was Beaty. But she also had to come and go between Glasgow and her father's lavish home in Kanhala. She had only lately left India; and many of the family savings had gone in helping her.

Minnie Jackson was all right: it was all in the family, as they rather finely said. But there was a determination, as grim as death, that there should be no more adventures beyond, or near, the pale. Beaty,

a competent girl if ever there was one, must redeem the family prestige.

"I don't know what is the matter with Washy, that he won't catch on, mummy."

Perhaps the matter was, that the snare was too plainly laid before a preoccupied bird.

"Never mind, dear : we'll all try to help you."

"Washy's sister has been presented at Court, as you know. Three of the illustrated papers have her picture. She is not pretty—too much like her brother. But there is a distinction, a poise, I don't know what, about her !"

"Of course there is. That is what it is to belong to a truly aristocratic family, dating back five hundred years. They say that the Irish branch of the Washingtons, as of the Wolseleys, is now the more distinguished. O Beaty, I think I could fold my hands and die happy if I could once read of your being presented to your sovereigns, and see your pictures in that connection !"

"It is what I am trying for, if you don't worry me too much about it, mother."

Mrs. Sampson sighed ; and picked up from the floor a volume in olive green. It was the second volume of Washington Irving's *Life of Washington*, in an old edition of five volumes.

"You see I am getting on with it. How handsome he was, both as a youth and as an old man ! No wonder that the Americans adore him. I wish that our Washy looked more like that. But the blue blood is the thing. Your father says that we have the first trait of a rising family, which is, to hold by each other."

"I should hope so ! I wish that we could have asked Laura. I still want to spend a day with her at the Residency, as arranged. She has the latest fashions. She helps me with my dresses ; and is generous in giving away her own things. But I shall be frightened, in that once merry house, with that poor datura idiot, moping and mowing about ! Fancy Laura not know-

ing!—I can't honestly say not caring, for she will break her heart when she finds out. Our ayah says that Radhabai has her will now of the colonel, who is like an infant."

"Mrs. Moor should never have allowed that woman in the Residency. It makes one's flesh creep to think of the things now going on there; I could cry, too! And only ourselves, and every native or Eurasian in India, knowing what has happened! That comes of the Government's pig-headed obstinacy in not letting your father be the Residency Surgeon."

"I don't suppose daddy could have prevented the poisoning. I think and think about who can have done that, and why. It is as fascinating as a detective story; but it baffles me, so far. I suppose you know who is in the second line of suspicion, after Gaspar?"

"The Maharaja, of course? But the poor innocent can laugh at any such thing."

"I bet he'll cry like a baby when he understands. But he's getting naughty of late, making such big melancholy eyes at Mrs. Rennie."

"*Chup* [Shut up], child. Some things may be seen, but not spoken of."

"But why doesn't daddy speak out about Colonel Moor?"

"His pride, which is so sensitive, is concerned. It is not as if he could do any good by interfering. So he need not speak until he is professionally consulted. Besides, we are partly aware of the truth only through our touch with native life, due to our having lived always in India. It is not socially advisable to draw attention to that fact."

"You are wise, mother. But Colonel Fendall is a ——"

"He is a charming gentleman, you mean to say, my child. Who is that coming up the driveway?"

Beaty, who had nimbly sprung to her feet, stood in the side entrance to the veranda, peering out, with her eyes shaded against the glare.

"O darn it all! It's Washy's orderly. It's like my luck. I suppose there's some bad news. He's not coming, I know he isn't."

To them approached a magnificent Sikh, bearded like a pard, and with the smiling eyes of his race.

Yes, here in southernmost Maharashtra, quite a thousand miles, in a straight line, from the nearest borders of Sikh-land, which is the Punjab, came a genuine Sikh, dwarfing the local servants who sprang into life as he appeared, and many shades lighter in colour.

This is not one of those narratives, sometimes by writers of repute who have not lived in India, in which Sikhs proceed from Gurkha regiments, in which loyal Rajputs would seem to be, *horribile dictu*, followers of the Prophet, and in which there is only the haziest distinction between Hindus and Mohammedans. In these pages things are related as they happened, and alone could have happened. No Mohammedan was closely connected with Laura's story. So far down in the Peninsula as Kanhala State the Moslems are comparatively few in numbers, and even less important by any force of character.

"Say salaam, Gulab Singh," said Mrs. Sampson, graciously dismissing the messenger.

"I am so sorry, dear," she continued, after half a minute, to the scowling Beatrix. "Washy can't come to-night. He has been out in the districts, and has only just found my note."

"I was so fully counting upon him. Isn't it the most infernal luck! To meet the Bishop! Yet we should have waited until we had his acceptance in black and white."

"Wasn't there some brush between Washy and the Bishop, not in Kanhala, a year or two ago? I have it! I wish his lordship wouldn't do such things: it reminds me of his fearful arbitrariness with poor Stephen. The Irish Protestants are seldom High Church. You remember the story now, don't you, Beaty? How Washy quite innocently, at the Holy Communion, put

out his hand for the wafer, just as we all do with Mr. Rennie here. ‘Down! down!’ said the Bishop, fairly knocking him on the knuckles, wanting him to put his tongue out for the wafer, which he did, to avoid a disturbance in church. I have seen Washy illustrate how it was done: so!”

Mrs. Sampson, to illustrate, knocked the knuckles of one hand sharply with the fingers of the other: “Down! down!”

“I have not seen Captain Washington so angry on any personal subject as when telling of this. He is a religious youth; yet for a year he kept away from church altogether; and he vows that he will not again be ministered to by this Bishop. Still, I did not dream that it would prevent him from sitting down at the same table with his lordship. Washy does not usually cherish resentments.”

“Was it to avoid the Bishop that he declined, or to avoid me?” Beatrix asked pitifully. “I declare, mummy, I feel perfectly discouraged.”

“Nonsense, dear child, you’re not to be so! Of course it was the Bishop: this is not the only case.”

“Then to blue blazes with such a Bishop!” exclaimed Beatrix. “An officer and a gentleman (and the only one I’m ever likely to get, living here in this hole of a place) to be rapped on the knuckles like a schoolboy.” She laughed. “It almost makes me sympathise with Stephen’s naughtiness, there now, mummy!”

“Not quite that, dear, with all the sorrow and the shame it brought upon us. Bishop Wedderburn’s methods are certainly exasperating. His family, although of plain gentility, is nothing compared to Washy’s. Naturally, there is a certain presumption in favour of anyone bearing the title of lord. When his lordship sits down at my humble board this evening, I shall proudly reflect that not for hundreds of miles in any direction, not from sea to sea, is there anyone else entitled to be called lordship, or my lord. It is one of the three old statutory, or Presidency, bishoprics, too,

created by act of Parliament, and not by any missionary society."

Mrs. Sampson visibly swelled, and preened herself, as she uttered these sentences. Beaty, too, was impressed.

"To be sure, mummy. The Bishop is not dining out anywhere in Kanhala except with us."

"Yes, is it not an honour? So we must try to put up with his little ways, and their consequences."

The Sampsons, by no means excluding the vehement doctor, were as fond of titles as a donkey is of thistles. It was not often that anything Parliamentary came to Kanhala; but failing that, even the lesser military titles were dear.

"I am more than sorry that Washy has backed out," pursued Mrs. Sampson. "Let me see. That leaves us with thirteen to sit down to table. Whatever shall I do, child?"—in a wailing crescendo.

The pleasant Residency gang of Kanhala, "the usual lot, the familiar dozen," sometimes rising to seventeen and even eighteen had dwindled. There will be no hot season quarrel to record, for the large family, which composed station society, were more worthily engaged. Even Dr. Sampson's explosions did not prevent Colonel Fendall from dining with him. But it was the Residency side of society, which usually set the tune, that was now weakened. As the Maharani had explained to her husband, the First and the Second Assistant Residents, both of them military men, were, with their wives, afar, bent upon duty or pleasure. Mr. Newlyn, of the Indian Civil Service, and Third Assistant, kept his lonely watch at Pinzara, with little to listen to save the waves of the Indian Ocean. So even allowing for a couple of additional clerics, invited as attendants on the Bishop, Mrs. Sampson's dinner list had numbered only fourteen.

Perhaps the Fourth Assistant, Captain Washington, would not have been so unkind as to refuse, could he have foreseen the result of his action. For it left Mrs. Sampson, the mother of the station, whom no one wished to disoblige, with thirteen on her hands!

106 The Song of Surrender

"Oh, what shall I do, Beatrix? Help me out, child! I am ashamed to be superstitious. Do not laugh at your old mummy, who has not had your advantages of education: it was the way I was brought up. But I cannot, I dare not, conduct thirteen to my dinner-table. It is quite certain to bring misfortune upon someone before the year is out."

"Invite a stopgap, even now," suggested Beatrix.

"Clever child! But whoever shall it be?"

At her elbow, unregarded, hummed a busy quasi-European community of some scores, constituting, more or less, the second class society of Kanhala—the poorer Europeans; Eurasians, not always poor; missionaries of at least two types, the American dissenting and the English High Church, admitted to certain privileges, but denied others. It was a cosmos, an infinity. If it did not abound with interesting personalities, it contained certain such; with others which might have been made interesting by sympathy and right understanding. The larger world awaits an adequate rendering, from within, of this subordinate world, often needlessly hidden by a self-defensive shyness. Each personality in it was as sacred to itself as any of its supposed betters, and perhaps a good deal more sensitive—so many self-centres and world-centres. The Europeans in it were not invariably, as the Sampsons were, country-bred, meaning born and educated in India. There was a curious side light over it from Portugal and Rome. Not to speak of the yet other, and fascinating world of Protestant missionary labour, this community could show, for high character, Hilda Walpole, governess to the little Ranis; for sheer looks, the vivid brown beauty of Mrs. Lyne, the dentist's wife; and for intellect, Mr. Rosario, Chief Secretary to the State, who kept the wheels of administration a-going whatever ministers came and went, the best-read man in Kanhala, a personality which a few of the famous ones of Europe, who had visited this station, remembered with pleasure.

But all these might amuse themselves as they would

this hot-season evening. The Sampsons had too recently come out of something resembling this world to risk compromising themselves by recognising it: the wholesome friendships that this naturally kindly family had jettisoned as they steered their ship into the social haven!

"I wish that we could ask the Honourable Mr. Hozier, M.P.," sighed Mrs. Sampson.

Beaty blushed further over the healthy brick-red of her countenance.

"I wish so too," she answered boldly, considering. "But no, mummy, it would never do at this stage. You must stand by the inspiration which you had when you sent back his card. His open acquaintance is not for us. If he is an M.P. on one side, on the other side he is but a Labourite, sitting for Houndsditch. There is more distinction in snubbing him than in cultivating him."

One would not have thought, from that speech, that Beatrix occasionally kept, among the dusty hedgerows of Kanhala, which were of prickly pear, appointments with the youngish and good-looking politician, a widower (for propriety), irregularly met at the Club, irregularly pursued. She did not much care whether her mother knew of these appointments; they would have been condoned, as being with a legislator of England. The bazars knew, and were shocked. But what chiefly gave anxiety was the possibility that Washy should come to know. Hozier had quite taken Beatrix on a certain side of her nature, while she amused him in the empty twilights. But both felt that the currents of their destinies were too divergent ever to unite.

Mrs. Sampson sometimes had, as her husband and daughter gratefully acknowledged, a social *flair* exceeding their own. It was this that had made her insult the M.P. when he called—the only one who ever had called—at her door a few weeks before. Since then she had longed to fall upon his neck, particularly

108 The Song of Surrender

after beholding his broad shoulders at the Club, where he had been brought by his host, Amar Rao, and had played games with Beaty—so anomalous was the situation. Dr. Sampson and Beaty had the greatest difficulty in the world in keeping her screwed up to her original resolution, and in showing that only thus could she score.

“Search my memory as I may, I cannot remember ever having met a Member of Parliament,” said Mrs. Sampson.

“I think it highly unlikely,” answered Beaty. “Even I have only done so in this one case, though Minnie and I have lived in England as many years as you have months, poor mummy! Not so many Members of Parliament come to India; they are not apt to be the best of the bunch when they do come; and still fewer ever reach our God-forsaken Kanhala. It does not matter so very much.”

But to Mrs. Sampson it did matter.

“I believe that he’d come like a shot. Miss Panton is coming, who is the daughter and the sister of baronets. Why are there not more missionaries of such birth? A proud woman would I be if I could sit down to dinner between a Lord Bishop and an M.P.! Who would have precedence?”

“Don’t ask me. It would never do. It would be a mingling of classes. The Bishop would be very angry.”

“I suppose you are right,” sighed Mrs. Sampson. “Well, then, whom shall I ask for to-night? There is no time to lose.”

“Since Washy is not to be here, there will be no harm in asking Laura Lowell. We don’t want to be hard on her.”

“Of course we don’t. All right, then; let us give her another chance.”

Mrs. Sampson waddled to a little writing-table on the same veranda, and wrote a note to Laura, hoping that, though Colonel Moor was still so poorly, he could

spare her to come to dinner with them, even at such short notice, at eight o'clock that evening.

Time was, a generation earlier, while the Sampsons were socially rising, when it had taken Mrs. Sampson a severe struggle to learn how to write a presentable note. She had come more than passably through this and other ordeals. Only in a moment of excitement did her speech ever betray her. She was truly a wonderful woman. As her friends liked to observe, one would not easily think that she had once been a dressmaker in Rampart Row, Bombay, with a dusky husband before that, to see her, in these latter days, turning down an M.P., or giving one more chance to a Resident's niece.

Letters are so seldom sent by hand in England ; and so constantly in India.

Mrs. Sampson summoned a smart belted messenger, who was not far, and handed him the note.

"For the Missybai at the Great House. Be sure and bring back an answer—*zabab zarur!*"

"Oh, if I had any chance with Washy!" remarked Beaty. "I'd make him a good wife, if once I could get him."

She never cried about this or any subject, being as hard as nails.

"God will give you a chance yet, my child. Keep your eyes open, and do not despair. But in regard to this calamity to Colonel Moor."

"Yes, mummy."

"The Maharaja is bound to be suspected. We, who have known him most of his life, know that he has neither the wits nor the wickedness. But he has a terrible Minister, capable of anything."

"I cannot see it that way. Such crime is not good enough for Moropant, who has horse sense, though he is not our friend. Washy says that Colonel Moor had come to trust and favour the Diwan more and more. I am sure he cannot be the criminal. But there will be a fearful *esclandre* when the datura poisoning comes out!"

110 The Song of Surrender

"There is your dear father, walking home once more in the noontide sun. It is in vain that I tell him not to. I know that it does not hurt him. But it would hurt any Englishman not raised in India ; so it draws attention to his immunity. To walk at this hour in the hot season, with a motor, and tonga, and various horses ! It doesn't look nice."

Dr. Sampson had let enough coolness soak into him, at the swimming bath, to last through much of the torrid day. Under his thick pith hat, he was striding blithely over the half-mile to his house. It was such vigorous habits that kept him hale at three-fourths of a century, and that prevented his personally experiencing that degeneration of the tropics, the existence of which he would deny.

The arid landscape already shimmered in the heat haze, only relieved by the green of trees, which makes the redeeming feature of Kanhala.

"Breakfast ready, mother ?" asked Dr. Sampson, standing in the veranda with one hand resting upon Beaty's shoulder. "I feel decidedly peckish."

"It won't be ready for half an hour, dear ; I'm sorry."

"Then it's half an hour to the good. I shan't bathe again this morning. I've had a splendid, refreshing swim."

"Gregory, here is a note from Washy. He isn't coming, worse luck !"

"Ah." His sympathetic grip on Beaty's shoulder tightened.

"And I've just now sent for Laura Lowell to come instead, to prevent our having to sit down thirteen."

"I shall be glad to see Miss Lowell once more. But she's not a patch, in my opinion, on Mrs. Rennie."

"We know, Gregory. And you shall have your favourite at your side."

"Anything from Jimmy this morning ?"

"Yes. He can't have me, as usual. I fear I shan't get to Sialkote this season."

A Country-bred Family 111

“Well, it’s our gain, mother.”

James Twemlow was Mrs. Sampson’s Eurasian son by her depressed first marriage, for whom she had toiled at dressmaking during sundry years in the seventies. He was in a subordinate service, far away in the north—and a jolly good thing for the Sampsons’ social repute. Even as it was, there were persistent rumours and jests.

“Country born, country bred, not a drop of country blood!” Dr. Sampson had been wont to boast of his little family at an earlier date, until he learned to bar the subject altogether. But the existence of Jim Twemlow, usually at school in the Hills, made the claim less than strictly true. Beatrix did not like to be reminded of this half-brother, being content with her immediate family.

Twemlow was treated with a combination of snobbishness and of yearning love. Dr. Sampson had been a more than good father to him. He was never on show at Kanhala; that would have given the game away. But his mother liked to visit him, unmarried, every cold season when possible. For the last three years he had been putting her off on one excuse or another. Ribald conjecture was rife as to the reason.

Dr. Sampson moved around to the front veranda, where he stretched himself in his stout long chair.

With the increasing lethargy of age, which even he could not beat off entirely, he was beginning to spend more time thus. The natives, who venerated him, spoke of his sitting there, always looking, looking at India. This was the land of his love, his only land, though he had spent a flurried six months in England.

His character and career were more wonderful than his wife’s. His pulse still beat firmly; life was still good, at seventy-five. He wanted much more of it—ginger was still hot to his palate. How he clung to this one life and love he knew! although a sincere believer in another world.

He could look back sixty years, seventy, past the

tides of time and of early wars, to the buffeted, virile European orphan that was himself, but now seemed an objective creature. Survivors of the Mutiny are now as rare in India as those of the Crimea in England: yet he was one of them. He could remember that time of stress and agony, when Empire seemed to be slipping from us, when, for a moment, even the natives, with their quick instinct, scorned us.

"Is it coming over again?" he would ask himself. "Let them hate us as they will, but not scorn us! The next time it will be final."

Back even of the Mutiny he could go, to Gough's tough victories against all reason, and the scattering of the Khalsa.

Over, over ; done with ! A hundred times he looked from the veranda northward, over the Krishna bed and the burnt Indian landscape shimmering in the noonday glare.

"Everything will soon be over for me. I must relax my grip—feel the dust in my eyes. But God grant that I may first see my little Beaty well fixed !"

CHAPTER X

IN PRAISE OF SNOBBERY

"THE climate of Bombay City crushes me. Do you know, Mrs. Sampson, my wife says that it has been the ruin of a naturally good intellect?"

"I am sure that it has!" she answered warmly; then had a terrible fear that she would have done better to hold her tongue.

"I sometimes think so myself. That moist heat; I wish that I could express myself with the occasional vigour of your husband! I cannot work for more than two hours a day in it; poor work at that. Bombay plays havoc with my brain as well as my skin. Malarial, too, undoubtedly. A fearful thing, malaria; it has been the undoing of nations. It either kills a man, or leaves him mildly idiotic; I have had more than a touch of it myself."

There were sympathetic murmurs, without a single snicker.

"I wonder that your lordship can stand it!" sighed Mrs. Sampson, sinking the fact that she had lived in that climate for years.

"You could not stand it, my lord, but for the sense of duty," put in the senior Ritualist missionary at Kanhala, a married man who looked like a celibate.

"The call of duty may soon be to a dry climate," suggested the domestic chaplain, who was of better standing.

"Thank you, Sefton. Ah, if the finger of Providence, or of the Secretary of State, but pointed that way! You may not be aware, Mrs. Sampson, that I am

114 The Song of Surrender

considered by some to have claims to be the next Metropolitan."

"What a noble sounding name!" said Mrs. Sampson, upon whom the word acted almost like Mesopotamia. "I am sure that you would become it, my lord."

"You are kind, as always. No, I will not deny that I can see my own claims to the new dignity, in the ancient capital of India. After serving for more than twenty years in the Third Order! Otherwise, I have no resource save to resign next year, as soon as I become eligible to the Collector's rate of pension; for the pension is the same, though not the salary, worse luck! But I do not think that I should be scrap-heaped yet. The climate of Delhi is at least dry, though not in all respects desirable—not equal to your breezy uplands of Kanhala."

"Delhi is not good enough for you, sir," stoutly asserted the domestic chaplain, who knew how thickly the flattery could be laid on. "With your unique experience, you are worthy of a Home See."

"Australian bishops have been moved up into the House of Lords," said the Ritualist missionary, with an anxious servility which rather missed its mark. "But never yet an Indian bishop. I wonder why? Remote rectories are considered good enough for them; and they are proud of a deanery. It is high time."

"It would be such a distinction for us all," murmured Mrs. Sampson.

"Are they all crazy, or am I?" Colonel Fendall said to himself as he entered the Sampsons' dining-room a quarter of an hour late.

The innocent medical officer thought, in a flash, of certain groups of cranks in Tenniel's illustrations to *Alice*. He recalled the Hatter, the Hare, and the White Knight. More than one of those before him had the same worried eye, the backward tilt of the head like a gander or an empty ear of wheat, the air of distress over something intangible.

Crisp and clear, for an instant, Colonel Fendall had

the picture of the brightly lighted and adorned table, with one vacant place, around which sat twelve eaters. Not less than half a dozen of them derived, in one way or another, from the Church.

"Far too heavily touched with the clerical tarbrush," he reflected, to account for any vague impression of unpleasantness, as he slipped into the vacant seat.

That would explain a certain dinginess, the prevalence of black; but not everything. In deference to the Bishop, the laymen had donned their black suits, instead of the white evening dress which they would naturally have worn at this season. But in addition there was something queer. After reflection, it appeared to resolve itself into two notes of variation from prescription.

At Mrs. Sampson's ample right shoulder sat the Bishop, a presentable man of fifty-two, albeit with a disfiguring red blotch upon one cheek. He fancied himself much for a certain alleged resemblance of profile to the more portly phase of Napoleon. But this likeness was blurred by a skull cap of purple velvet, decidedly prelatiical, which he thought it necessary to wear at most times as a protection against stray neuralgic breezes striking a bald head.

The other note of difference, more glaring, was the grey Kashmir shawl, drawl tightly about thin shoulders, which was exhibited even at table by the always chilly, but *hochwohlgeborne*, Miss Panton. Her glance was malignant, deadly as a point-blank cannon. But this maiden missionary was sister to a baronet of some bleak renown, both academic, political, and religious. Such a recruit did not often stray either into the organisation of the Ritualist Mission, where she presided, without pay, over the work among women, and sundry unhappy Eurasian sub-missionaries, or into Mrs. Sampson's dining-room. Being who she was, she would have been allowed to carry either eccentricity or malignity much further than she did.

The rest of the table was not notable, save at one end. Here Dr. Sampson, his huge beard of spun silver

116 The Song of Surrender

descending into his plate, was wrapped up in his neighbour to the left, the only beautiful woman present, Mrs. Rennie. Although a mother she still had a round shape, modestly indicated through the only evening gown she owned, the cheapest ever worn in Residency society. The Rennies had their points; and one of these was shown by the fact that Mrs. Rennie, being quite unable to afford real jewellery, wore none. She had to vary from those with whom she associated in several ways, which must have been hard for her. She could not entertain in return; she had no conveyance in which to go out; no table servant worth bringing to stand behind her chair, as did the other guests.

But she took it all with such a woodland freshness, such a luminous smile, that there was no criticism to be made. The station liked to see its patriarch paying grandfatherly, and rather courtly, attentions to her; he took such a zest in it! It was understood that Dr. Sampson was generally to sit beside her. Formality was pleasantly disregarded at the well-nigh family gatherings in Kanhala, to which a homely touch had been given by Mrs. Moor so that it could have been said of them in the Greek phrase, that these entertainments pleased even the day after they were given.

But to-night there was a twist, a constraint, perhaps due to the black invasion. Two lesser clerics attended the Bishop. One of these was his chaplain, travelling with him. The other was his host in Kanhala, unavoidably asked out on this one occasion. In the way in which he hung upon the Bishop he suggested the curate of the partially excellent egg. He was clad in a long black cassock.

In contrast to this was the emphatically secular array, correct evening attire and nothing else, of Albert Rennie. He seemed to draw himself apart, not quite becomingly from the orders which were, nevertheless, his chief asset in life. Yet not the same, either. His fellow missionaries' orders were provincial, Colonial, hardly valid at home without a lot of fussing. His, Rennie's, were from some

Bishop in the Midlands, valid throughout the Empire. He was honorary chaplain, which meant without any additional screw, in Kanhala. Moreover, he was of Jesus College, Cambridge—quite forgetting that the Bishop and the domestic chaplain had rather better degrees. In little Jesus as in great Trinity, there is constant need to remember of others: "They, too, are human beings."

This was Residency society. But where was the Residency contingent, which usually controlled it? Where was Laura?

In the case of Laura, as of Dido, it was to be shown that rumour—let us say gossip—is the swiftest of all evil things.

Mrs. and Miss Fendall had arrived at the Sampsons' in the motor, in due time for dinner, saying that Colonel Fendall had been urgently summoned, while dressing, to the Residency; and that he would arrive, afoot, as soon as he could get away.

This is not one of those parts of India where Europeans wisely refuse to sit down to their evening meal until the thermometer has fallen to ninety degrees. The climate of Kanhala is more merciful than that by at least ten degrees. It has neither malaria nor mosquitoes; and it has the perpetual little breezes. However fierce the heat may seem at moments, it remains short of terrific.

In token of this, Kanhala City lacks two pleasant things, which are yet better missed, since they connote a bad climate. These are palm trees, and punkas. Palms may be seen (as they may be seen in Penzance), but they do not flourish, apart from irrigation. And the bungalows contain neither the languid punka nor the tireless electric fan. They are simply not needed. The Residency, to be sure, from an ancient sense of dignity, has the apparatus for punkas, never required save upon a gubernatorial visit; and the last Viceroy could not endure punkas because of the curious effect the draught had upon his broken neck!

118 The Song of Surrender

So Mrs. Sampson had no excuse to delay seating her guests at her punka-less table. Nor did she wish for any. Rather, but for the ineffable happiness of entertaining a sort of a lord, would she have wished the meal over before Colonel Fendall arrived. For without him they were still twelve. When he came he would make them thirteen, bringing sure misfortune. And it was all Laura Lowell's fault!

Her heart was, therefore, in her mouth when Colonel Fendall, with a nod all round, and something approaching a bow for the Bishop, slipped quietly into his seat. She was also bursting with curiosity, moral indignation and a great scandal.

"As soon as Colonel Fendall has finished his soup," she said, after a decent interval, "he must really tell us the news of the Residency. Such doings were never known on this earth before—at least not in Kanhala. O Laura Lowell, Laura Lowell! To think that I should have borne you up on my wings, sheltered you, tried to make a possible member of society out of you!"

Twenty-four ears were pricked up at these words. All knew something; yet all wanted to know much more.

"You astonish me, Mrs. Sampson," said his lordship. "Is it possible that you can mean the daughter of my gifted, but, I fear sometimes frivolous, friend, the murdered Governor of Bombay?"

"Whom else, my lord? But tell me one thing, Colonel Fendall, I conjure you: has Laura Lowell come back yet?"

Having sent away his soup plate, Colonel Fendall answered:

"No, Mrs. Sampson, Miss Lowell had not returned some fifteen minutes ago. Colonel Moor is in a great way over being deserted by her, as he calls it."

"The poor man! I feel for him. It is not his fault. But blood will out. I never did think it right that she should come to the Residency. But I have tried to make the best of it. This morning I thought that I might as well ask her to this dinner. A messenger has

been over for me every hour since eleven o'clock. I assure you, my note has been worn through by the thumbs of my peons!"

"Terrible! Who would think it? But this is heredity," said the Bishop.

"I left the Residency first this morning," announced Colonel Fendall, who was racing through his fish course, "at as nearly as possible just twelve hours ago. Miss Lowell was then ready to ride off on her black Arab, Star, with the Raja Amar Rao. She was much concerned for her uncle; but I advised her to take the ride. She agreed unwillingly, insisting that she would be back in an hour's time."

"I feel certain that Laura meant to come back," said Beaty Sampson, who made a point of speaking kindly of other women. She looked well, with her green eyes, in a dress of shimmering sea-green silk; but her arms were rather thin.

"It is in vain that you would shelter one whom you made your friend, Beatrix," said Mrs. Sampson, who seemed inflated this evening. "So is the Raja Amar Rao our particular friend in the State—a Prince by nature and by birth, if ever there were one. He has his own religion and code of morality, of which we do not judge. But we cannot sanction or condone such doings on the part of Laura Lowell, who is nominally a Christian, and who has sat at this board as an equal. Where, O where is she at this moment, an hour after darkness? and what has she been doing?"

"I commend your sentiments," said the Bishop, without answering her questions. "It seems to be a very sad case of retrogression, of throwing back, of inherited instincts proving stronger than any training or environment."

"It is the environment that goes against her," broke in Dr. Sampson's booming voice from the foot of the table. "India has awakened the black blood in her, and made it dominant. I always said that the Eurasian would come to harm beneath this sun."

120 The Song of Surrender

There had been little conversation by couples ; and now less than ever. The company was too small, and the Bishop and the doctor both too anxious to thrust in their oar.

"Perhaps it has never worked like that in any other case," ventured the domestic chaplain.

"It has worked so in this case ; and that is enough."

"How did you leave Colonel Moor?" asked Mrs. Rennie sweetly.

"Very poorly, very unhappy, I must admit at last," said Colonel Fendall. "I'll have to ask you to take a look at him, Dr. Sampson, if he doesn't mend soon. He is distempered, irritable, hysterical, though not in pain. Gone clean off his chump, I should say. This day has made him worse ; and he is feverish. He has been pining for his niece, with no one to look after him but those two cheeky Christian ayahs, Radhabai and her brat. I shall look in again at midnight, on my way home. If he is not better, I have a great mind to send him to join Mrs. Moor in England."

"Shame on Laura Lowell!" said several voices together.

But still Beatrix persisted :

"I am sure Laura must have some excuse, if the truth were only known. Something special must have happened. She is devoted to her uncle."

Mrs. Rennie smiled and smiled divinely, without putting in a single good word.

"Anyhow, one thing is settled," said Mrs. Sampson, in a voice of doom. "From this day Laura Lowell can be in our society no more. I will not say that we will speak to her no more, if it is in our power to help the erring. I blush that such a subject has come up with such publicity. But as far as in us lies, we must draw the line, we must make a distinction, we must take our stand on the side of morality, of appearances, and of white blood."

"Hear, hear, mother!" cried Dr. Sampson, with a pleasant homeliness, from his end of the table. "Them's

my sentiments! You can often express, better than myself, just what I'm thinking. A wonderful woman!"

Nothing, indeed, could well add to the sensation or the publicity of Laura's exposure. "Be sure thy sin shall find thee out."

Francis Wedderburn, D.D., was a prelate "so over violent and over civil" that he was widely known as the wobbling Bishop. Certain transactions in early life had hampered him with a reputation for tortuousness of method which he was never able to shake off. A closer acquaintance with him suggested Gilbert's Ko-ko, or the Lord Chancellor, in the levity, not of heels, but of head and heart. He also resembled Louis XI. in so far as that monarch would associate genially and familiarly with many of his humbler subjects until he suddenly feared that they might forget his power; and would then take it out of them by acts of wanton authority.

Bishop Wedderburn's subjects consisted of some one hundred and fifty clergy, ranging from Government chaplains to Native Christians in orders. The greatest part of these had been ordained by himself in the course of the last two decades, could not serve in another diocese, and had to remain as responsive to him as clay to the potter's thumb. There was also a Eurasian to whom Wedderburn had given deacon's orders, with the expectation of priesthood, thus spoiling him for secular work. But, as there was no precedent on that side of India for a Eurasian in priest's orders, the Bishop had never summoned courage to complete his job, thus leaving the poor fellow suspended between sea and sky, neither fish nor fowl.

For the rest, this Bishop was tipsy with his prerogative of the laying on of hands. He had once had scholarship. He had also frequented, in a measure, the company of the great; but the great were apt to find him out.

Nearly a score of his most forlorn subjects belonged to the Ritualist Mission which had a large organisation at Kanhala, and which nominally included Rennie.

122 The Song of Surrender

Theirs were meagre souls and personalities. They suggested under-feeding, alike of mind and body. The master-tailor, in these cases, had been obliged to cut the coats according to the cloth, which was skimped. Certain High Church Missions consist scrupulously of University men. But these had been formed at St. Augustine's. Their mental adventures had been limited to conscientiously choosing a more or less "advanced" attitude towards ritual. They were content to carry into the twentieth century the standards of the sixth.

The Bishop had been compared to the Second Dionysius, who, when shaken off his throne, became a schoolmaster rather than surrender the habitual use of authority. The Ritualist missionaries may not have seemed much more formidable, regarded from above, than Corinthian schoolboys. Stephen Jackson had been one of them; and Mrs. Sampson still smarted, amid her adulation, to think how summarily he had been dealt with. But among themselves they were full of self-importance, as they were of intrigue. The arbitrariness which they experienced they took out, in overflowing measure, from their hushed native subordinates. "Authority dearly loves authority," as Rennie used imprudently to say of his colleagues.

"You don't feed us like this, Law," said the Bishop, stowing away.

The missionary thus addressed, with whom his diocesan was stopping for several days, choked for an answer which would be polite.

"We are paid for lean days, not fat," or "Your lordship would be the first to come down upon us like a sledge-hammer if we furnished such a feast as this," would have been truthful answers. Indeed, Mrs. Law had been craftily advised by one who knew some of the Bishop's peculiarities: "Give him nothing but mutton, my dear." But she was not presentable enough to have been asked to the Sampsons' even on this evening, when guests were to seek.

"Never mind, Law, I understand ; I would not have you do so," said the Bishop, cheerily. "I'll take another helping, if you please, Mrs. Sampson. We used to have that dish when I kept house in Poona with General Sir Edward Bond, nearly twenty years ago, in my celibate days. He was the last of the separate Commanders-in-Chief, before the Presidency commands were abolished."

"Is it possible that you knew that famous soldier so well, my lord?" asked Mrs. Sampson, fluttered.

She had come down from her high horse of a few minutes before, and had made haste to mount her low horse—a very grovelling steed indeed, hardly to be distinguished from the ground.

"Yes, Bond and I rubbed along together, not unpleasantly, for the six months preceding my happy marriage. A little rough and ready I found him, free of speech, besieged with colonels ; but a good Churchman. It is a mistake for dignitaries, each supreme in his department, to chum together : some of the military used quite to stare down my ecclesiastics, when they met at tiffin. I am but a successor of Him who had not where to lay His head."

"To be sure, my lord : try this iced champagne. You had at least the title of lordship, which the General had not. As the poet says : 'Two stars keep not one sphere.' I believe that Sir Edward Bond is now a near neighbour of Mrs. Moor in Worcestershire."

This was true. Sir Edward Bond, G.C.B., who was approaching eighty, made much of Mrs. Moor and her scapegrace son, Reggie. He liked to hold forth, in his boisterous way, about old Indian days. It was edifying to hear his version of the partnership with the youthful Bishop, which had been shortened by the latter's haste to marry the daughter of a deceased Governor of the Bank of England.

"I remember his seeing her father's death among Reuter's cables," the big brass-bound General would declare. "Then where did he rush off, do you suppose ?

124 The Song of Surrender

To Somerset House, to verify the will, before proposing? Even that would have been intelligible. But to his confessor in a black petticoat he went posthaste, that had the keeping of the thing he calls his conscience, to set the wheels at work to get him absolved from the vows of celibacy he had taken at Oxford!"

"Dishonest, I call it," the veteran would conclude his impetuous account. "There it is that whippersnapper's line to crack up the monastic life, to encourage celibacy, or at least marriages which are not much more attractive than the single life. Yet he wallows in every domestic luxury—children following each other as fast as they can, with a provision for each. That young prelate is very much married indeed. His stomach required a little wine, as he used to explain it!"

As may be gathered from the above, Bishop Wedderburn was a character with whom it was a calamity to have business dealings. With all his worldly qualities, there was in him an incalculable fibre of fanaticism. This fibre could sometimes be played upon, to their advantage, by others; but only by fanatics.

* * * * *

"Haste in his step and absence in his face.
Though void of honesty, of sense, of art,
A foolish head and a perfidious heart,
Yet riches, honours, power he shall enjoy."

"Miss Panton, your brother the Admiral is shortly to marry a lord's daughter, is he not?" asked Mrs. Sampson, turning to her best-born guest, who did not seem to mind this sort of thing in the least.

The acidulated virgin shifted the shawl upon her shoulders, relaxed that stare which would have frozen the equator which she had maintained during the discussion about Laura Lowell and with which she invariably greeted her, and condescended to give some details.

"The daughter of a Baron of the United Kingdom! It reflects some dignity even upon those who know other members of the family. We hope to meet

Admiral Panton and his bride when we next visit England. Dear Lady Panton has invited us to stay at Panton Priory. Only think of it, Miss Panton has one brother who is an Admiral, another a General, and the eldest, the most famous, a Parliamentarian ! ”

The conclusion implied was : “ Yet she dines occasionally with us ! ” The rest were invited to grovel ; which they did more or less, according to their natures.

But Mrs. Sampson wished a little envy on her own account.

“ When we journeyed to England, through Italy, the heat was as severe as anything we have known in India. Dr. Sampson wore a white sun topi with a red *paggari* about it. You know he sometimes looks rather fierce. And for a whole day the Italian guard persisted in calling him *Il Generale Inglese*. Do you remember, Gregory ? ”

A merry guffaw of laughter came from the end of the table.

“ Yes, mother. That guard saw me as I should have been. ”

But the Bishop wanted to have his say about railway experiences.

“ You know the Southern Maratha Railway reserves a first class carriage for my use whenever I wish to travel up or down the Presidency, or beyond. Only, the carriages are so stuffy ! ”

“ So your lordship says, having been used to the best from the first. We have to pay in advance if we wish to reserve a first class carriage. But there is nothing like early training and advantages in life ! ”

“ So I often reflect. In fact, Mrs. Sampson, I have a little saying upon the subject. ”

The Bishop smiled deprecatingly, as one who is going to venture something desperate.

“ It is not a remark which it would do for you to make, Law ; nor yet for you, Rennie. But my position prevents it from being misunderstood. My missionaries

126 The Song of Surrender

—yet this is nothing personal—have often given me occasion to reflect that the Spirit of God itself cannot supply the place of early social training !”

There was appreciative laughter, with some discreet horror.

“ Good, my lord !” said several.

But : “ I call that something pretty near snobbery,” said Rennie doggedly.

“ If that is snobbery, then is snobbery a right and a necessary thing,” cut in a new interlocutor. “ Either a man is a Sa’ab or he’s not a Sa’ab. Those who are Sa’abs ought to stand by their own class.”

It was Mr. Sweets, the Principal of the Rajram College, just back from long leave. He was one of the smallest of men, forty-seven, and so dark that there would have been talk about it if his birth and position had not been beyond dispute. He seemed to carry the opinion of the table with him.

“ Snobbery,” went on Sweets, lecturing Rennie, “ is often a very useful quality, if it may not even be called a virtue. Without it a man cannot get on in the world ; no, not if he begins life with the best of chances. Without it he will be put upon, and swamped by undesirable people. Snobbery is simply the defensive principle in social life, the principle of exclusion in friendship.”

“ Hear ! hear !” cried the doctor in deep tones. “ Have some more port, Sweets.”

The little man, who seldom said a good word for anyone, had excelled himself in praising snobbery. The Bishop, astonished at having the word taken out of his mouth, and his two immediate clergy, kept silence. But Rennie must needs rush into the breach.

“ Get out !” he cried. “ You cannot mean what you say, Sweets.”

But this mere form of address, to a man his senior, and of very different standing from himself, was a bit of a liberty.

“ He certainly does mean what he says, Rennie,”

interposed Dr. Sampson ; “and I quite endorse it. There are certain things, arbitrary and conventional though they seem, which have got to be regarded. A man in an Indian station, for example, is not at liberty to choose his own acquaintances. I had an experience in that way myself, once, which I never forgot. It was a lesson to me for life.”

And making himself comfortable, his eyes full of fire, fixed not unkindly upon Rennie, who did not specially need this lesson, being quite enough of a snob in his own interests, the doctor proceeded :

“I began in the North, you know, but have lived chiefly on the Western side. It was forty years ago, in the little station of Igatpuri, that I had the lesson which I now recall. I was doing well in the place. There was nothing against me, socially. One morning I returned by train from a night of shooting, at a distance, with several other men. They drove off to their houses in their respective traps. My trap had somehow failed to arrive. There was no conveyance to be hired at the station. The nine o'clock sun was pouring down upon the platform. My house was two hours away ; and I was faint for early breakfast. I didn't know what to do !

“At that moment a spick-and-span young Eurasian, with a nice face, in white drill, came up to me all bedraggled as I was, and respectfully touched his fresh pith helmet. ‘Excuse me, sir,’ he said, in a pleasant voice. ‘I see that you have missed your trap. My dogcart happens to be standing here. As your house is on the road to mine, would you mind letting me take you so far ?’

“He knew me, though I did not know him. Yet I could place him. He could only be the new Inspector of Police—a man on one hundred and twenty-five rupees a month, in a post often held by natives—subordinate service altogether. I ought not to have thought of such a thing. Yet it was one of the most subtle temptations of the devil, socially speaking. I was so tired ! I made sure that no one would see us.

128 The Song of Surrender

"On the contrary, we passed several of the leading people of the station. They saw me, whom they had taken as their equal, driving in the face of day with—the Inspector of Police! Can you wonder that they were angry?"

"Those who know India will understand how very serious was the fault I had committed. Whether you can believe me or not, it nearly killed me, socially. I was a bachelor then. But positively, it took me the best part of a year before I could recover from that mistake and regain my standing in Igatpuri society."

The man was far worthier than that speech of his. Both he and Rennie had defied snobbery when it came to marrying; and secretly honoured each other in their hearts for it. Perhaps Rennie had pitched into the contest because he felt the Bishop's tone to be an affront to the romance of his life.

There were murmured expressions of sympathy, from which Rennie did not dissociate himself.

"I can quite understand it."

"Such things do not do."

"Country blood is the devil and all to get mixed up with."

The doctor's finger, wherever he laid it (save in surgery) was not wont to be light.

"Such things do not do," he repeated, approvingly. "A man like our Lord Bishop here may associate with whom he pleases—though he acutely feels the difference! But forty years ago I couldn't do it; I couldn't do it now! Nor can you do it, Rennie. Country blood is the devil and all to make complications in a society that thinks no evil. If a woman is concerned, it is all the worse, because then there is always the possibility of *marrying blood*. I have mentioned no names; but I cannot be sorry that one is to be excluded from among us hereafter. I see that Mrs. Sampson is trying to collect eyes."

With a certain sweep of gesture, he rose to let the ladies pass into the drawing-room, which was but the

front half of the same vast apartment, shut off from the dining-room by curtains, screens, and a piano.

There was this to be said, to relieve recent words at least of hypocrisy, that there was not a person present that night who had any mixed blood, although several were swarthy. And all knew that Mrs. Sampson had a hidden and loved Eurasian son.

The men moved up closer to each other when they sat down again.

"In my belief," said Dr. Sampson, "there are two crimes, or at least offences, which, by their very nature, can never be proved. They are bribery, and adultery."

"That is interesting," said someone, "and worth thinking about. I suppose there is no doubt of it?"

"There is not."

There seldom was any doubt about Dr. Sampson's opinions. He liked to dogmatise at his own table, where he now sat impressive, after the ladies had left. He spoke with the weight of old experience, a majestic patriarch. His white beard swept over his white shirt front. The still keen eyes glowed, a trifle resentfully.

"Just consider it, my dear man," Dr. Sampson continued. "I maintain that there is no third offence of the same intangible nature, which can be put in the same category with these two. That is the unvarying result of an experience which reaches back to the concluding year of the Sikh War!"

And the imperious eyes glanced around the table, as if challenging anyone else to contradict or to question.

"It is just as well that they are intangible, for there is plenty of both those things going on in Kanhala," said little Sweets, from the end of the row, in a tone just low enough to take advantage of a slight deafness which was increasing upon the doctor. The other men smiled, yet decorously.

The Bishop poured himself a brimming glass of sweet champagne.

"*Deus sit propitius huic potatori,*" quoted Rennie,

130 The Song of Surrender

with pointed intonation, wondering who else would follow the words, yet proud to be able to quote them.

The Bishop flushed darkly.

"Ah, from Walter Map's *Bishop Goliath*. You scorn our order beyond measure, Rennie. I will give you a quotation which you will enjoy: 'Proud and perverse prelates out of number.'"

"O my lord, what a shocking sentiment!" exclaimed the curate of the egg. "I am sure no one could hold it."

"Whose is that?" asked Rennie.

"Mr. Rennie holds it. Nay, Rennie, if you are such a good scholar, do you tell me who said it."

Rennie could not. After all, if he was a graduate, the Bishop had been a don. Neither had any genuine love of letters.

"*Es war einmal ein Bischof*," hummed Rennie defiantly, repeating the title of an Austrian novel, of which he had read a review. Yet the implication therein did not apply at all to this Bishop.

The rest were not up to the: "Be polite but not friendly to Bishops." They saw that Rennie, with singular lack of manners, was doing something not unlike baiting the Bishop; and they were shocked. But he could take care of himself.

"Ah, Rennie, you are very clever fellows at Cambridge: the older University isn't in it with you! Still, as the only University men here, we must hold together. Shall we join the ladies?"

The Bishop exaggerated, as often. His chaplain was a University man. Even Sweets, who directed the education of Kanhala State, had a pass degree; while Walden, who was tacitly not admitted to Residency society, was a ripe scholar.

CHAPTER XI

RAGHOBHA THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER

ABOUT an hour later than the day before, Raghoba turned up in the Residency compound, in the hope of meeting Laura, as arranged with Rakhmabai.

He was shaven to-day ; yet he looked older. The spring had gone out of his step. For he was travestied in a chokingly hot cassock of white cotton, with fifty-two buttons down the front, as he painfully knew. Such was the command of his new despot, Mr. Law, the Ritualist missionary. Raghoba would never be counted worthy of orders, though there was more human worth in him than in all the St. Augustine's men in Kanhala, to put it mildly. But it was time that he came under discipline, after a lifetime of unchartered freedom in a dissenting organisation. Even in the most subsidiary service of the Church he must swathe sturdy calves that had borne him tens of thousands of miles in the service of the Lord. He must dress, not according to choice or convenience, but according to the approved practice of the sixth century.

It had well nigh broken his spirit in a day. Not thus was he wont, with swinging, succinct draperies, to tread the free Maratha hills !

Moreover, he was looked upon askance (somewhat like Mr. Rennie in the sphere above him) as one tainted with strange doctrine—though he knew no doctrine save the central one of the Gospel ; and too individualistic in his methods. His homœopathic medicines had been taken from him, and he had been forbidden to send for more ; the orthodox medical doctrine also

132 The Song of Surrender

must suffice. Worst calamity, he had been ordered right away from Kanhala City, where was his Missybai Laura, where was the climate he knew, where were American dissenting Christians much like those he knew, to a village in the jungle a hundred miles to the southward, where the people were more Canarese than Maratha, where he knew it would not *karamat* (suit him), where the air and water were sure to mean misery.

So Raghoba's mouth twitched with more than its usual automatic motion as he halted while skirting the Residency, and stood with hands upon his tall iron-shod staff (would that too be taken from him?), contemplating the big building and his own small destiny.

This was the outcome of his thoughts:

"When I was in the old Mission I was in a better place."

His children were now doing well. Yet it was largely in connection with them that he had quarrelled with his tolerant missionary at Tulsipur, some three degrees further north, and had used that cheeky modern weapon, which it was not like him to use, resignation.

There is one most interesting Protestant Mission in Western India, which has had the experience of a century, many of whose members have had both aptitude and grace, and which is considered unrivalled in the training of native preachers, or helpers, as they are called. As with servants, an obvious result of admiration, in the immoral East, is to make you try to steal the object admired. Younger and cruder missions all over the land, with divergent doctrines, have, for a generation or two, sought to tempt away these envied agents by methods which would be strongly branded in a secular transaction. Higher pay, which is liable to turn to ashes in the mouth, is the most frequent bait.

Raghoba, as admittedly his missionary's best man,

had been often tempted, had been long faithful, and had at last fallen.

"All for a handful of silver he left us." In this case it had been for a rise of a rupee or two in a pitiful monthly wage.

"I promised my first missionary Sahib, Fulton Sahib," Raghoba now reflected, "never to leave the service of the Mission. I have done so; and it is deservedly that this unhappiness has descended upon me."

He could not away, anyhow, with these barren brethren of the trailing or the whisking robe, whose servant he now was. A very few days in Kanhala had been amply disillusionising.

With fond recollection he recalled his dwelling six miles out from Tulsipur, near the banks of the Krishna, there a lesser stream. Quite incredibly bald it would seem to the poorest European. Four little earthen rooms, each opening out upon an earthen veranda, not into each other. It was a double house, intended for two families, or for one family and a schoolhouse; Raghoba was considered lucky to have the occupancy of the whole. It was literally and exactly unfurnished. Furniture is not necessary to native decency and happiness.

There was here no metal stove, no carpeting, no bedstead to lie on, no table to sit at, no chair to sit upon, save perhaps a precarious stool, for the indulgence of a Sahib who liked sometimes to come out when the moonlight shed an enchantment over the bare landscape, to a feast of Mrs. Raghoba's savoury and highly-superior native cookery, spread upon the beaten earth outside, without even an attempt at a tablecloth. Nothing was missed in this house; though there was nothing to lay a book upon save the lamp-niche in the earthen wall. There was hardly a book to lay anywhere save the big Marathi Bible. Raghoba's wife kept the corners of the rooms swept with her handleless broom; kept the floors, as needed, freshly smeared with what

134 The Song of Surrender

has been called the cleanest thing in India, cow dung. The missionary kept the woodwork of the house, always being eaten by white ants, in good repair. For a quarter of a century it had been a wholesome, happy human home.

Raghoba could cultivate, in some ground at the back, vegetables, which were licit ; and, in the gravelly bed of the dried river, before the Monsoon, water-melons, which were attractively illicit. Ah, those watermelons ! They were a speculative enterprise, supposed to be secret from the missionary, remunerative if successful, but liable to be washed away in a sudden freshet.

What memories they brought up ! Christian helpers must not turn a penny in odd ways. But various missionaries had been more than kind, in ignoring the existence of those watermelons.

"Fulton Sahib was the best of my Sahibs," mused Raghoba. "How he fought to secure me the right of drawing water from the Krishna, when the proud-stomached Brahmins opposed ! He it was who, with my help, without which he could have done nothing, as he often said, rescued from the gutter the little Eurasian waif who now lives in this lofty dwelling, and to whom I go."

He pondered.

"The years consume us, and are consumed. Little Rangu ! Very small and dirty she was, and indecently white, when I went to the missionary about her. Now they say that she dazzles like the moon with her beauty. I wonder how she will receive me ? Has she, perchance, recovered from the exploit of yesterday, with which the city rings ?"

So it appears that Raghoba, like everybody else knew all about it. It was not in his Mahar nature to judge Laura's fault harshly. After all, she was half a Maharin, his own castewoman. He may even have counted it to her as a distinction that she had so notoriously captured the heart of so gallant a Prince as Amar Rao.

“Both her parents inclined that way. We know what Muktabai was in her youth. The Swargwasi Lowell Lord Sahib was generous and great and noble: never shall I forget his benefits to me. He was so merciful that men cared not that he kept not the Law. And now the beautiful daughter of his folly! Truly, the apple falls not far from the tree.”

Raghoba found Rakhmabai scouring brass vessels upon her few square yards of veranda.

“Salaam, Dada,” she said cordially, with her flashing smile. “Enter.”

But Raghoba discreetly stood outside.

“Your countenance is fallen, Dada. And why go you bound closely about the feet as the Madam Sahibs walk of late? These are not the garments of our land.”

“No more they are. But they are the orders of my new masters, who must be obeyed, alas! How fares the babe that had the fever?”

“Completely cured, and sleeping sweetly within. It is the little pills, with your blessing, that have done it, Dada.”

“The blessing of Parameshwar, Bai!”

“But a few more of the pills, to save against need, will do no harm.”

“There are no more of the sugar pellets, with magical tincture against various ills. My new Sahibs have seized what I had, and flung them upon the dung-hill, forbidding me to send for more. Henceforth am I to preach their religion without seeking to benefit the people, who should go to the hospitals.”

“Some of us, though I hold not with them, would rather die than go to the hospitals. What would the big white doctors have done for the babe yesterday? while the black men would have eaten bribes.”

“True, Bai.”

The judicious distribution of homœopathic remedies has often proved a valued means of grace, or at least of

136 The Song of Surrender

making friends. With faith, or good luck, or both, they may even cure, or seem to do so.

"I always said that the Sahibs were a rum lot, Dada. Are you beginning to find it out for yourself?"

"Not so. But some are less worthy than others. And these have ordered me and my old wife, with the dust of the Tulsipur Road not yet wiped from our feet, to take another long journey into the wilderness. So you will look upon my face no more."

"I am sorry for that, Dada. Not to make vain distinctions, I fear me all Sahibs are bad. You are not contented in your new faith. You have done us a good turn. I will do you one by telling you to re-enter the Hindu fold. Though, as a Mahar, you may but dwell in the outer gates of our faith, you will there know happiness and self-esteem."

But Raghoba answered, with variations: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

"So the Kerani Missybai whom you seek has had a fine outbreak since this time yesterday! I thought it was not for nothing that the outriders were dismissed. Wah! there is not a Hindu *sasubai* [mother-in-law] who would not thrash her son's wife to the bone for such a shameless prank."

"She is then safely returned?" asked Raghoba, ignoring the language, and glancing up at the bungalow.

"In the dead middle of last night did she return, with her paramour. It is said that they rode off fifty, if not one hundred, miles into the jungle; and that both their horses are dead. My husband is as one distraught, fearing he will never more see his horse, Ee-shtarr, again, and will thus lose his service in this compound. It is said that the Raja Amar Rao sent a telegram to have his lightning-chariot [motor] sent out to him. All day the mad Colonel Sahib in the bungalow was madder than usual, wailing for his niece—if she be his niece; even Radhabai could not comfort him. Two and four times did they send, *jaldi, jaldi*, for the Residency Doctor Sahib, the other colonel. In the middle of the

night he came again, still finding no Missybai. 'I don't like this: this isn't right,' he was saying, standing on the veranda. 'What will become of my patient? I can't leave him with a worthless woman like Radhabai.' At that moment the Raja Sahib's car dashed up, knocking into the Doctor Sahib's. The Missybai rushed into her uncle's arms; and the Raja Sahib and Colonel Fendall Sahib gave each other *shivvi*."

This vivid account may be allowed to pass, with an emendation or two. Everything had contributed to bring Laura's exploit into the utmost possible relief. There was no shading about it: it was all in the glare. When, at the end of her song, she fell back into Amar Rao's arms in the mango grove, they were thirty miles from the telegraph in any direction. The adjoining village supplied them with plenty of good Maratha cooking. Amar Rao's position enabled him to get off a messenger on a pony, who was six hours on the road, summoning his car. This came out in the evening about the time Mrs. Sampson's guests were rising from dinner. Walden was in it. The party, none the worse if they were not esteemed the worse, not even bedraggled, reached the Residency steps at midnight, to have a brush with Colonel Fendall, as related.

Rakhma's tongue was not clattering a bit more recklessly than thousands of other female tongues at the same moment, in bungalow or native hovel, about Laura's escapade and infamy.

"And here comes Pi-turr," she said. "Pi-turr, of whom I told you yesterday, our other datura idiot, the kinsman of our *bootlairdada*, Jerome."

There approached them, under convoy of his kinsman, a middle-aged man, very dark, with face bloated, but not by drink. He looked unhappy, self-concentrated, and puzzled. He wore quasi-European clothes, being a Goanese; but was enough of an Indian not to mind the sun beating down upon his bare, rumpled locks.

He could salaam when salaamed to, and answer yes and no, or a little more. He did not like being brought

138 The Song of Surrender

there on exhibition ; and glanced about him sullenly. He was not offensive, though touchy when disturbed. His lower lip inclined to hang ; and the eye was vacant, if troubled.

This was Peter, once an apothecary in the Government service, who had outdistanced all his Portuguese kinsmen in the race for success, reaching fifty or sixty rupees a month, besides pickings, with inviting vistas beyond that. He now liked to get away by himself, if possible to a little mud room near his dwelling, where he pretended to read, though he could hardly read a sentence—he, who had been fairly educated in several languages. He could at least sit there, on a chair, at a camp table, brooding, holding his head in his hand, obscurely questioning memory and destiny. Though he came to the Residency kitchen for food, and went on other errands, he blinked like an owl when among men. Perpetually he seemed to be engaged in thinking out, how it had happened to him.

The tragedy of Peter's story was that there was no story to tell. He was a wreck, with the depressing ugliness of a wreck, instead of a ship fit to surmount the storms. There had perhaps been barratry. "Veda ! [fool !]" the boys were apt to call out after him. He was a burden to his family, who had once been a good support. The whole household, for a living, had entered, a Protestant mission : the wife, a competent woman was given employment, while the children were irregularly taken into the orphanage : a leading question arose as to whether, in such a case of conversion from Catholicism, there should be re-baptism.

No European physician, save Dr. Sampson, would ever admit that this was a case of anything more than going clean off his chump, as the Residency Surgeon elegantly said of Colonel Moor. Sampson, and the natives, considered Peter's to be a case, but not a bad one, of datura poisoning. Jerome, the civil butler, could give Raghoba no details. There were no details to give.

It had happened somewhere vaguely northwards, a

dozen years ago, before Peter was qualified for a pension. It came in a night. There had been a dinner abroad, an outstanding feast which was remembered. And, of course, as always in the East: "An enemy hath done this."

Surgeon after surgeon had laughed at the missionaries who had taken Peter to them. "A cock-and-bull story if ever there was one. You will never have done if you listen to what the natives say. My dear fellow, can't you see that this is a case of confirmed, though not extreme, idiotcy?"

Peter, who showed by gleams that he remembered days of more dignity, was allowed to slink away with his bundle of food.

"There!" said Rakhma, spitting out fiery betel-nut juice, "have you a word to say for those who can doubt what has happened in the Great House?"

"It is very sad," said Raghoba, distressed. "Calamity rushes down resistless upon the castles of the great and upon our humble dwellings, smiting the reed like the banyan. The wickedness of this land is unthinkable. The English see slowly, but punish heavily. And now, let there be permission for me to seek the Missybai."

"And forget not to speak for my Ramya, O Dada!"

Crows and paroquets were screeching, there was a multitudinous rustling of green leaves from the central banyan, water splashed soothingly above the garden well, as Raghoba wended his way to the bungalow. It was a beautiful morning still, though decidedly hot.

Laura assented readily when the house servant, to whom Raghoba had been introduced by Rakhmabai, informed her that a Christian man, hailing from Tulsipur, begged to see her.

She received him in one of the large ground-floor rooms, opening on the veranda, windows wide open, through which the breezes went.

She was radiant that morning, exultant, expanding. Never had she taken quite such delight in her health and in her womanhood. She felt that she had come into her

140 The Song of Surrender

heritage. She was untouched by shame, or any consciousness of guilt.

Laura was becomingly dressed in white muslin, with sleeves which showed the rounded arms to the elbow. Her face had a blush-rose glow upon it. The moist lips, full, yet moulded, were a little open, in the smile of animal well-being; while there was the exotic touch, for India, of the violet eyes, shining with content, and the reddish, piled-up hair.

She had reached the best of life. So happy she was that she wished to make others happy. And she had been stirred by the name Tulsipur.

If the admirable mission in which Raghoba had been trained has a fault, it is said to be that of bringing up its Christians to expect too much equality of treatment from Europeans. Laura was aware of the weakness of Christianised natives, the world over, for shaking hands. Though her uncle had told her from the first day not to indulge this, she knew that it would please her visitor. So she reached out a fragrant, soft white hand to poor Raghoba in his surplice, who gaspingly took the end of it, for an instant, between his brown, dusty palms.

He was visibly overcome by the coolness of the shaded room, by her whiteness, by the beauty which he fully felt in a few timid glances, by her graciousness and grace altogether.

"Like a flower! Like a flower!" he murmured, in Marathi.

Laura, not ill pleased, said in the same language: "Sit down my friend."

Raghoba laid his staff out upon the floor, squatted on his heels against the wall, covered his quivering face with his hands, lifted up his voice, and wept.

A servant, who had looked in at the door at the sound, stepped silently away.

Laura, wondering, expectant, moved, sat upon the edge of a chair. She felt drawn towards this stranger, whom she remembered passing upon the road the day before.

"You knew me in my infancy?" she asked at the end of a few minutes.

"How did you know that?" said Raghoba, yet avoiding, as habitually, the use of the crude second person.

"My heart told me."

Then was the preacher like to begin sobbing anew, unstrung as he was that day.

"It is a good heart that you have, Missybai; as your noble father had before you. You ought to be a missionary Missy, for they are merciful to the poor. Raghoba Dada was I called in your infancy. Alas, alas! I was then young, and am now old; and the Lord Sahib your father, and the Missionary Fulton Sahib, who was like a father to me—also your ill-fated brother, Bapu, who meant no ill, but was led by Fate—these are all dead."

It was, indeed, a thought to bring up something of the shimmer and the evanescence of human life.

"Continue, Raghoba Dada," said Laura, "until, perchance, I can bring you to mind."

"In the Sadar Bazar at Tulsipur you dwelt with your mother, Muktabai. You played in the gutter with Bapu, amid the cast-off marigold flowers. Very little you were, and tousled, who are now so stately and fair. I held you on my knee in those days, carrying you in my arms."

There had not been much of that sort of thing, for Muktabai shut up the child, and shut out Raghoba, as soon as the great lawsuit was threatened.

"Tell me about my mother first of all. You are fresh from Tulsipur, and from her?"

"Yes, Missybai."

And in that moment, perhaps at the recollection of all he had left behind him, one corner of Raghoba's mouth twitched with the little automatic motion.

"Now do I recall you, O Raghoba Dada!" cried Laura, with a little glad peal of viols in her voice. "Let there be forgiveness. But by that same twitching of the

142 The Song of Surrender

mouth do I recall you. I, and Bapu, smaller than myself, clinging to me, used much to wonder at it."

"Blessings upon you, and upon your memory!" said Raghoba, pleased to be remembered at all. "Verily, your Marathi speech is such as no Europeans, save one or two missionaries, ever attain to."

"I count myself as your countrywoman. But tell me about my mother, how you left her, and how she bears herself in her affliction."

Raghoba had not failed, before leaving Tulsipur, to prime himself, incongruous though it might seem, with the latest news of one whose name would be a passport to him with Laura.

"Often does she dream of you, and long for you, my Missybai, specially in this time of bereavement. And 'Where is my little Rangu at this moment?' and 'Shall I ever look upon my Rangu, whom I sold for silver in my wayward youth?' she will cry out. Yet is she well, and calm at most times, much honoured by the wicked people for that which has happened."

Laura's large, fair face quivered at the recollection of the tragic tangle—the father slain by one who claimed to be his son, and who was her brother.

"How much you have to tell me, Raghoba, particularly of the past."

And for an hour he told her, she questioning much, and listening, of the once famous case which had been conducted, with such laudable motives, to prevent her from growing up into the life of her mother. He was not absolutely frank, yet unusually so for a native, seeming to take comfort in disburdening himself.

"You say my mother knows that I am at the Kanhala Residency?"

"Yes; it is widely known."

"Fain would I have her with me here; or write to her. But it would never be allowed. *They* are angry when I speak of it."

It is the idiom that a native woman uses when referring unavoidably to her husband. Laura glanced

around her apprehensively as she spoke; almost, in fancy, one could see the future nose-ring, see the subject Hindu wife sitting at the millstone. Raghoba quite understood.

"It is better so, Missybai. Stir not up old dead things, though they appeal to us."

"I will not, fortunately. The gods have given me a quiet mind; and I have satisfaction in the future. Behold how things have come around much as they might have, had you never stirred yourself to help me and to rescue me. Yet I would have nothing changed in my destiny. But now tell me about yourself, Raghoba, old friend!"

Just as her father had addressed him, only half a year earlier!

He told her of his homely miseries, of his abandonment of the old places and connections, of his children, of the order to move a hundred miles further into the jungle, of the incompatibility which cut him off from the Ritualist workers.

"They are not sympathetic to you? I hardly know any of them, save the Rennies. But not in that cassock were you clad as I remember you, Raghoba Dada!"

He glanced ruefully down the fifty-two buttons which were his bane: then the two laughed with mutual comprehension.

"Never did I see such Sahibs as these. They do not seem to be Sahibs at all. They are not manly men."

He was fumbling for some expression like *a miserable scrae of a man*.

"Beware, Raghoba; though I am sorry for your discomfort. They have one greater than themselves, called the Bishop, who may be here to-day."

"God help me! I was called to Kanhala to be confirmed by him—at my age! Well, Missybai, we have a saying."

"What is it, Raghoba?"

"'The higher a monkey climbs, the more he shows his tail.'"

144 The Song of Surrender

There was a shrill squeal and titter at Laura's elbow.

It was satin-skinned little Ruth who, with bare feet and shimmering sari, had crept up unheard. That was the sort of proverb which suited her understanding, whatever the application. Laura pulled the pretty child close to her.

Raghoba saw the two Eurasians, the one whiter than most Europeans, the other hardly to be called fair or light at all, embracing. He wondered, yet rejoiced, to contrast Laura's placidity with the feverishness of the disastrous brother whom he had known so well.

"Not like these was *our* Padre Sahib, Reverend Fulton Sahib," he remarked.

"He and Mrs. Fulton were wonderfully kind to me," said Laura. "It all comes back to me, after our conversation. I can see myself, the grubby little image whom you describe, and whom I can half remember, in the clean mission bungalow. I remember the baths; and wearing the clothes of the missionary children during the first days."

"Ah, but he was a grand Sahib! Never shall I know such another. Once, in my green youth, I wandered from the old Mission, just as I have lately done, with less excuse. I thought a preacher's pay was not enough. I would be a grain merchant, in my native village below the Ghats, forgetting the service of Christ. And a grain merchant I was."

"It did not succeed?"

"I could never manage the fool figures, or anything to do with writing, though otherwise as good a man as the next. Well, the end of that adventure was that I was some hundreds of rupees in debts, which would have hung about the necks of my grandchildren. Then did my noble Padre Sahib come to my rescue. About half of my debts he paid out of his own pocket. And the other half he agreed to take, month by month, out of my salary; so badly did he want me back again. I have thought, at times, that he could have paid the whole himself without feeling it. Anyhow, there I was

once more a Christian preacher. It was then that Fulton Sahib made me give him the promise, which I have broken, never to desert the old Mission."

It must be admitted that Raghoba in the effusion of his heart was letting himself go in a way not quite normal with him.

Laura listened with patience, and ready sympathy, bending forward in her chair, with one arm around little Ruth.

"I do not think that either of us will ever again know such a Padre Sahib. But that reminds me, old friend, that I too can, and ought to, do something for you."

She left the room and ran upstairs ; returning with a currency note for one hundred rupees in her hand.

Raghoba fairly fell at her feet, kissing them, with renewed sobs, when she passed it to him. His feelings were genuinely affected ; but the material gift was also momentous to him. His was the situation of a man with natural capacities out of all proportion to his lot.

"Tell me more about Padre Fulton Sahib," said Laura good-naturedly.

"I will tell you how he fought to secure me the right of drawing drinking water from Krishnabai, for in that your noble father was also involved. There was no living for me in the house that I have told you of, unless I could somewhere draw water, and there was no other stream than Krishnabai. In vain I offered to draw water below where the village caste people drew theirs, so as not to contaminate their supply. But the Brahmins did not wish me to live in that village at all. They would not let me draw water anywhere.

"So my master, Fulton Sahib, carried the law case for me through court after court, until it came before that grand Lord Sahib, you noble father, Missybai. He finally decided for me, that I had the right to take water even from the sacred Krishna. He was generous-minded, with the stature of a giant, and such a kindly face and way. But the Brahmins nearly went out of their minds at the decision. At every stage they tried

to bribe the magistrate. Lowell Sahib, your father, once told me that the Brahmins came to his bungalow at night, bearing bags of gold money, not silver, in their hands, offering it to him if he would decide for them. He laughed in their faces, did the great Lowell Lord Sahib, who was then a young man. 'Go away,' he said. 'I have no need of gold.'"

They were at that point, in the praises of Sir Robert Lowell; Laura's eyes were filled with tears at the evocation of her father, and she was thinking of feeding Raghoba, when there was a sharp click of spurred boots and Amar Rao walked into the room.

"As you asked me yesterday," he said curtly to Laura, "so I now ask you, who is this man?"

"He is an old friend of my infancy, whom I can remember, named Raghoba, from Tulsipur."

"He is a low-caste man."

It was hardly in Raghoba to find himself suddenly so close to such a prince as Amar Rao, without falling at full length upon his face before him, which he did, somewhat frightened.

"There is permission to depart," said Amar Rao, avoiding the low-caste touch, and barely returning Raghoba's salute.

The Christian preacher was glad to escape from the room without damage. Yet was he wonderfully cheered and inspirited by the visit, to say nothing of the nearly seven pounds which he bore away. He had quite forgotten to mention Ramya. He did not set eyes on Colonel Moor, whom he had never seen, and about whom he had not taken the liberty of inquiring.

"Laura," continued Amar Rao, in English, which was the language they usually employed together, "I am not angry. I have come to see how you are after yesterday—ah, you could not be better. In particular, I want to say that it will be prudent to try to get your uncle out to the Club this evening, and on other evenings. Too much curiosity is being excited about him; we must not seem to conceal him. I shall be at

the Club, though arriving separately. You can support Colonel Moor, inspire him, speak for him. Perhaps he can go and come in the little victoria. As for the friends of your infancy, you will not need them as my wife. By the way, how much did you give that man?"

Laura may not consciously have resented her lover's tone. But her heart had also been warmed towards early associations; she wished to spare Raghoba. It was Amar Rao who had taught her to dissimulate, telling her that Hindu love must often be furtive.

So now she told her first lie to the man who yet had her complete allegiance.

"I gave Raghoba ten rupees," she said.

CHAPTER XII

PAYING CALLS

EXACTLY at the stroke of noon, on the same day, the Bishop set out in a tonga, from the Ritualist Mission headquarters in Kanhala, to pay a round of calls.

His Lordship sometimes liked a little ostentatious humility. On the occasion of this visit to Kanhala he had declined to be a guest of the State, luxuriously looked after by Mr. Rosario. He preferred, as he said, to share the hardships and the triumphs of his poorer clergy. The main Ritualist bungalow, occupied by Mr. Law, whose guest the Bishop was, actually stood in a corner of the native city, although within good grounds; and lacked the notable excellence of many mission buildings.

In these days, missionaries may own motor cars; while they frequently own carriages. But Mr. Law was not of these. So his tonga, in which the Bishop rode forth, uncomfortably perched upon the back seat, without attendants, was not smart even for a tonga. The driver was a wild Maratha, with flying turban-end, who urged on his rat-like ponies by leaning far over them, calling to them in a painful hissing whistle.

The Bishop had with him a large box of chocolates, which he was taking to little Cecily Rennie. He was quite capable of an insignificant act of kindness like this.

As he was well known to be influenced by anonymous communications, this Bishop was naturally a victim to them. In his bosom he bore one such letter, about

which he wished to consult Mr. Rennie. In his dispatch-box lay another anonymous letter which he had not the frankness to take to the Rennies. It had been written, on bazar paper, in an assumed hand, by the Bishop's host; for even a curate of the egg may bear spite. It told of Rennie's debts; and of the Maharaja's notorious admiration for his wife.

The first call was upon the Maharaja.

The Bishop had not written in advance to demand an audience, as etiquette rather demanded. Had he done that, the appointment might have come for some preposterous hour towards dawn. The Maharaja must even see him at the civilised calling hour of Anglo-India! Now this coincides with the hour sacred to noonday repose among the natives everywhere, and among some Europeans, particularly as one approaches the Far South.

The palace was not far. Its front lacked not only architectural distinction, but elementary neatness. Sepoys of the State forces stood slackly about on guard. The broad range of steps was sauntered over by leisurely pariah dogs, which any European would have shot at sight.

The Bishop's card caused a certain excitement. A sort of Chamberlain without trousers ushered him into a bare upper chamber, rigidly set forth with half a suite of old-fashioned gilt furniture.

"It is his Highness's hour of slumber. But he will be here without delay."

The delay ran into ten minutes, which were more like fifteen. Bishop Wedderburn did not like waiting a bit better than did Mrs. Gamp.

Silently Balwant Rao, in plain draperies, slipped into the room, shaking hands with the caller.

"I hope that your lordship is very well."

"I am glad to see your Highness looking so much better than when I was here some years ago."

"Ah, that can only be due to the exertions of Moropant Ghatgay, the most faithful son and servant that ever ruler had."

150 The Song of Surrender

The Maharaja spoke in his stiff, but sufficient English, with his habitual courtesy.

He seated himself in one corner of a curved little low sofa, so that his short legs could reach the floor. He motioned the Bishop to an armchair of limited size and comfort, placed in front of himself and to the right.

Perhaps Balwant Rao's eye was more than usual vacant. His ravaged face was certainly heavy with weariness. He had brought in with him a whiff of liquor inexcusable at that hour.

Bishop Wedderburn, in his zany costume, with the purple skull cap on his brow, tried in vain to adjust himself in the chair, which seemed to bulge outwards.

"A man of my position in heathen parts has much to endure," he remarked, with exquisite tact. "The climate of Bombay City gives me prickly heat, as well as mental troubles with which you will sympathise. My wife says that it is only devotion to the cause—"

He spoiled his sentence, remembering that the cause of which he spoke was that of undermining the faith of the bigoted ruler before him.

But Balwant Rao politely said: "I am glad that you are so *dharmik*." That word expresses devotion to one's own religion, a quality more or less honoured throughout the devout East.

"Yes, am I not?" said the Bishop, brightening up as he saw the way open to chatter about himself. "There is something wrong in the very air of India, hampering development. I would rather be a door-keeper in England! I have seven sons."

"You are blest of your gods," Balwant Rao interrupted. "Only one little son have I ever had; and all my devotions could not keep him alive, alas!"

The Maharaja was too weary to weep: the scene before him dazzled. His large head drooped upon his breast.

"So I have heard," said the Bishop. "As I was observing, I have seven sons. I often say that I hope none of them will ever come to India except as

missionaries. Of course that will never be: I can do much better for them than that, don't you think? But the saying has a magnanimous sound; and it encourages my inferior workers, who were not born or educated to anything better. For myself, the prospects continually improve. When I saw the Secretary of State, before I last left England, the noble Marquis said——"

There was an exclamation, which can hardly have represented what the Indian Secretary said.

The Bishop was petrified with horror. He was no longer being listened to!

Before him, ensconced in the arm of the sofa, with closed eyes and fallen head—yes, unmistakably snoring!—sat the Maharaja who was supposed to be a reformed character.

In at the door, with fluttering skirts and mind, came the Chamberlain.

"Excuse me. I thought I heard someone shouting 'Jam!' or 'Lamb!'"

"It was not I," said the Bishop with dignity, rising, and trying to control himself. "But I've never been so insulted in my life! I did at least think that your master was a good sort. Yet look at *that*. Pick it up and put it to bed."

"Yes, my lord. His Highness has lately been curtailed of his sleep. I will tell my master what you say."

Not even glimmering in the noontide glare, but lost in it, far out in the camp, in a waste of parched fields and of neglected prickly pear hedges over which the gaunt cattle trespassed, treeless, gardenless, without a separate driveway to it from the public road, desolate, hot, ugly enough to burst one's eyes, lay the thatched, low-pitched bungalow of four or five rooms which was hired for the occupancy of the Rennies, at some twenty rupees a month, by the Ritualist Mission.

Many students would have refused to attempt any intellectual effort in such surroundings. Life under the Indian sun was one thing in houses like the Residency,

or Dr. Sampson's, where the wind could go through shaded chambers, with high ceilings and thick walls; and a very different thing here. It was a constant and a crying wonder that the Rennies could turn out as they did from this hole, neat and effective, to move among those drawing six or ten times their income. A yet greater wonder was it that Rennie could at all conduct the small class in Theology which he was still, with many misgivings, allowed to teach; or pursue his own Marathi studies.

It was truly a stiff bill to fill, a lonely furrow to drive. It had been hard on Rennie, harder still on his wife. More spirit had been expended in just keeping their heads above the surface than in many a victorious social career. All had been done that in them lay; and done in vain. Unless something intervened, these swimmers must quickly be pulled under by the feet.

A paltry line of hovels at the back were the cookroom and the servants' houses. Only mean, untrained servants, "soldiers' servants," would accept such pay as the Rennies could offer. Yet their servants' bill approached to one quarter of their monthly income.

As the Bishop stood in the little general room, heated like a furnace, he resolved to get back as speedily as possible to the spacious bungalow, amid rustling, though not noble, trees, which he rented at Mahableshtar. Here the ceiling, a foot or two over one's head, consisting of stretched, whitewashed cloth, shook in any little gust, scattering bits of dried whitewash; as it showed, by the stains, that it let the rain in during the monsoon. The house had little veranda; and the unsightly bamboo matting, not always in good repair, was too much in evidence.

Rennie came out, with a frank good manner, from his study adjoining the best room in the house. Mrs. Rennie, who had gone to lie down, as usual with her at this hour, also quickly presented herself.

This woman kept her health and her looks to such a remarkable degree, under such conditions in India,

largely because she was not sensitive. In the classic regularity of feature, one line from the brow down the nose, which lasts to any age, and which might have been "coined in Roman gold," she far exceeded Laura, whom she did not equal for complexion. She was not yet twenty-four. Her brown eyes helped to give her that radiant, rapt, seraphic look, with back-blown hair, which made her a valued ornament in drawing-rooms, where she hardly needed to open her mouth. But this she could also do, not merely without giving herself away, but even with some grace.

"An immorally handsome wife for a curate who may soon be without cure," was the Bishop's cold comment within himself. "She attracts attention, she makes gossip: it had better end, so far as my diocese is concerned. Down! Down!" he was mentally saying to so much charm and beauty.

He produced his box of chocolates, asking for little Cecily, who had been put to bed, but was not asleep. Mrs. Rennie left the room to fetch the child for his lordship.

In the next few minutes the Bishop exhibited another side of his character, that which had earned him the nickname of Wobbler. He seemed timid, vacillating, disturbed, liable to be moved by the least breath, willing to take counsel of anyone.

"Look here, Rennie," he said: "can you tell me anything about your sexton?"

Rennie hardly could. Because he liked the name of honorary chaplain, and was still acceptable in Residency society, he read the services on a Sunday in the little English church in Kanhala cantonments, much to the jealousy of his colleagues. The sexton was a mere caretaker, a native, on perhaps fifteen rupees a month, and, by exception, a Christian. Neither of the speakers knew much more about him, except that his services were satisfactory.

"Do you think he leads a good and moral life?" asked the Bishop.

154 The Song of Surrender

"How can I say? At least, I have never heard anything against him."

"Come, now, I wish you would tell me something!"

And Rennie realised, with a sickening feeling, that this Bishop would welcome unreliable, if not false, information, rather than remain in an uncertainty which was fretting him. Such a man was born to be played upon. Such a man, in a place of authority, was a danger and an injustice.

"By Jove! How if such methods were applied to me?" Rennie could not help asking himself.

"But what can you, who do not profess to speak Marathi," he said aloud, with little courtliness, "have to do with an uneducated Native Christian?"

"I am in spiritual authority over him none the less," answered the Bishop, his face hardening. "I have just received this letter."

He passed it over to Rennie. It was a spiteful letter, in bazar English, accusing the poor sexton in question of all sorts of evil deeds and habits.

"But it has no signature!" cried Rennie.

"I know it has not."

"It is neither more nor less than an anonymous letter. How can you possibly regard such a thing?"

"Ah, Rennie, you Cambridge men, with your mathematical training, are stronger minded than we poor dwellers by the Cher. I do not feel it right to disregard this letter altogether. It might argue a carelessness about morality. The letter may contain some element of truth. What would you have me do with it?"

"Burn it up, and never give a second thought to it!" cried Rennie. "It is not just that you should let your mind be influenced by such cowardly trash. A letter like that is deserving merely of scorn."

"So you say; and it may be a good rule in secular matters. But it is difficult to know what to do in this case. Questions of conduct stand apart. It may be the duty of the Church to investigate even unsupported

charges. Anything is better than that wrong-doing should be allowed to continue—and upon consecrated premises, too.”

“But the greatest wrong is surely the making of anonymous charges.”

“I do not think so. You are too secular-minded, Rennie, as I have always noticed. It is the duty of the clergy to preserve the purity of their flocks, even at the cost of investigation which may seem prying. They must meet a higher than any earthly standard.”

Rennie, though he rather arrogantly professed not to admire this Bishop, was startled to find him thus throwing the gate open to the worst abominations of history—the Inquisition; Buckle’s loathed principle of Protection, especially clerical; and that delation which has always been the infamy of a strong Church! What, he thought anew, if anyone should get at such a mind of such a Bishop with stories about himself?

They felt themselves possible antagonists in that moment.

“Ah, well,” continued the Bishop, who was the first to recover composure; “if you remain one of ourselves, Rennie, you will come to feel that it is better even that an occasional injustice should take place, than that sin should be ignored. Hard doctrine, does it seem to you? but you regard doctrine too little altogether. I do not often talk like this.”

“Never!” Rennie was fiercely saying to himself. “I at least have principle.” He was hurt in his moral feelings; for, as he always maintained, he had his own morality, though this did not coincide at all times with that of the ecclesiastics.

Here, he thought, as in a premonition, was a man so accustomed to authority that he could use it lightly, recklessly, relentlessly. Such was the iron band of the episcopacy, against which he had been warned the day before, though he had always scoffed at it—the thing which has held the Church together, some think, through the centuries, and which has also made it

uniquely hated. He felt a breath of chill other-worldliness, infinitely alien and repugnant.

Then Rennie remembered that this man was, though he liked to deny it, his master : and, for the moment, his guest.

As for the sexton, it may be said that though he was rightly the henchman of the honorary chaplain, Rennie himself, the restless Bishop continued to intervene from above, plaguing him with investigations until he resigned.

Mrs. Rennie entered, bringing Cecily, three years old. At that delicious age she was chalky white, listless, evidently ailing, totally lacking both her mother's beauty and her father's fair good looks. It was only the latter's beady eyes that she carried on.

Cecily needed an ayah to look after her, and many medicines. What she most glaringly needed, which was to be carried right off to Mahableshwar for the next six weeks, was not to be thought of, on the score of expense. Yet unless this were done, she would perhaps soon die.

The Bishop, remembering his own rosy-cheeked boys, made much of the child, taking her on his knee, and fondling her. The mother's heart was affected.

"You are so kind !" she murmured.

"Am I not ? My wife says that my good heart will be the ruin of me yet. That is what has made me stop with the Laws : it gives the missionaries countenance. Yet I may tell you, Mrs. Rennie, that I do not enjoy it. Mrs. Law's housekeeping is deficient in—must I say it ?—tidiness."

Mrs. Rennie's housekeeping was rather more deficient in this respect, since it was conducted upon a smaller income, in a land where there is no living without good service. Already it was giving the Bishop a headache to sit in that low-pitched house where the Rennies had to live always.

"How different are our houses from those of the American missionaries !"

"Ah, but they have their reward in this world"—which was certainly a nasty way of putting it.

"Bishop," said Mrs. Rennie, taking from him the child, who was fretting, and sitting down before him; "I have begun to wish that we might have just a little bit of our reward in this world too."

This was not the first time that Rennie had wondered to see his hardly educated little wife make her way in directions where he, with all his assurance, found it useless to push. She sometimes "deviates into sense," he reflected, wondering what she would next say.

The beautiful mother, nursing her plain child, was no unworthy Madonna of the Chair. That was what people always said of her, that she fell naturally into pictures. The Bishop could not help being interested, though disapprovingly.

Lottie Rennie was taking her courage in both hands, not unlike any wife of a London employee who, on a rare occasion, finds her husband's employer her guest and willing to listen.

"It is because you are so kind that I dare to speak to you," she went on, more than a little frightened, her red lips quivering. "I cannot be like thin Mrs. Law, and interest myself in vestments when the house goes wrong. We are young, we have our lives before us: O are we never to enjoy them? There are things I have been wanting to say to you for years. Bishop, we cannot live on our income; I doubt if we can keep Cecily alive on it. But I am not begging. There is one way out of this misery, at least for a time."

She paused, looking to him whom they idly denied to be their lord, for permission to continue.

He would have rather she should turn her mind to vestments when life grew barren. Yet he looked kindly and consenting; which was part of the trickiness of the man.

"Go on, my dear," he even said. "Believe me, I am interested."

The very form of address, from a man of his standing,

seemed to imply good-will and furtherance within reasonable limits. "Always sympathetic, always warm, always ready to betray."

"It is Albert's Second Marathi Examination," she continued, encouraged. "You know that he has never yet been allowed to sit for it. We need not speak of the reasons. Albert is proud of not being like his fellow missionaries; but perhaps our life might be smoother if he were. Anyhow, they have sometimes been allowed to take this examination two years after arriving in the country. Albert has never been allowed to yet, though he is quite ready; and though we have been four years in India. That is my petition, as the natives say."

"I fear it is the rise of one hundred rupees a month in salary, which follows the passing of the examination, that you are thinking of."

"Of course it is, Bishop: what is the use of pretending to you? That hundred rupees extra will be everything to us. O it will be Paradise!" clasping her hands, and giving the rapt angelic look which came so easily to her.

"Your salary at present is—?" turning to Rennie.

"Two hundred and twenty-five rupees," he answered doggedly. It was a grievance with him, which was fast becoming acute, that he had been so long withheld from the proportionately large rise which, by the rules of the Ritualist Mission, followed automatically upon the passing of this language examination. Mentally he applauded the way in which his wife had led up to the subject; and resolved to let her have her say.

"How can we be expected to live on that?" Mrs. Rennie went on, in a vibrating, though not musical, voice. "All the other missionaries have had the rise before reaching our stage; they hope that we will never get it! Even they have never quite enough to live on. It is an eternal scramble and deficit."

"My wife is a good manager," put in Rennie. "With the extra hundred we could just do, for the present. Without it, we have reached the wild end of things."

"Don't talk like that!" said the Bishop sharply. "You might be accused of mercenary motives."

"Justice is justice," he said, offended. "The labourer has a right to his hire; and this particular vineyard is getting rather hot."

"The hot season has not much more than begun. The supreme motive, with your fellow missionaries, is not abstract justice to individuals, but the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts."

Rennie again began to feel baffled, sick. But his wife intervened.

"Our Father in Heaven knows that we have need of these things, Bishop—all the things that we lack. Look through this room, and house. Go into our kitchen, and see why we are not able to keep you to lunch."

But the Bishop waved the subject away, having already made up his mind where to lunch, if possible, that day.

"O give us a chance of honestly recovering ourselves," cried Mrs. Rennie, "by giving Albert the examination which is his right, and which is overdue! Otherwise I know not what may happen. We are crushed beneath bills and obligations."

"Bills are not forbidden; but debts, into which they so easily run, are forbidden," said the Bishop severely.

"Are you sure that you could pass the Second Marathi Examination if given, Mr. Rennie?"

"If it were fairly conducted, I could not help passing. Give me only a month in which to furbish up my knowledge. But I feel like the tree in the fairy tale: 'Shake me, shake me, I pray: my apples, one and all are ripe.'"

"Albert knows more than Marathi," explained Mrs. Rennie with a pretty pride. "He has continued the Sanskrit studies which he began at Cambridge, and which are so useful for Indian languages. O he deserves to pass; for he is always grinding away."

"I will use my influence with the committee to secure you the examination in Poona by the middle of June,

160 The Song of Surrender

when all have come down from the hills. Will that suit you, Mr. Rennie?"

"Try me and see, Bishop."

"Very well, I promise you the examination by that date. Let me see, we are still early in May. A little of our mountain air will do you no harm amid your linguistic studies. You have the trained habit of mind, only to be gained at the old seats of learning: doubtless your preparation has been of another compass from that of your fellow missionaries, not all of whom have passed this examination at the first trial; and one or two, of the more valued workers, have never been able to pass it. However, will you come up, a fortnight hence, to spend a week in my compound at Mahableshwar? I can give you a chupper."

Rennie assented, not too eagerly, and wondering what this meant. A chupper is one of the fragrant little houses of grass or hay, built only to sleep and sit in, in the shade of the Mahableshwar trees, and pulled down at the end of each season.

The Bishop rose to leave, feeling complacent. He had not offered, as he could so easily have done, to take Mrs. Rennie and Cecily to the hills for the remainder of the season—a step which would have prevented disaster, and might have saved life.

So sudden and overwhelming was the boon which had descended upon them, in the promise of the Second Marathi Examination, that the Rennies stood dazed in their mean front room, after his lordship had left, unable to realise their good fortune.

"It is you who have worked this, little woman," said Rennie, kissing his wife appreciatively. "A hundred rupees a month! What a deliverance! O ye gods, from how near the brink!"

The Bishop had been obliged to walk in the sun to his tonga in the main road. On the footpath he passed the Diwan, Moropant, stepping lightly, although a heavy man, to the Rennie's lowly front door. His great green car, newly imported into the State, at a

price exceeding even that paid for Mrs. Sampson's, had silently drawn up on the road beyond the tonga.

"Let me hasten back to my own car at Mahableshtar," said the Bishop confusedly to himself, nearly sun-struck. "I shall take care to be a State guest in Kanhala next time. But first I must examine into Colonel Moor's condition. What business can the Diwan have at Rennie's? After all, my commoner missionaries are more plastic material. It looks bad, bad; and confirms the allegations made against that indecorously pretty woman."

The Prime Minister, powerful and suave, meeting no servant, had come upon the Rennies in the front room, and had asked to see Mr. Rennie apart. So he was taken into the study, a room from which the bloom of the ugliness was removed by several shelves containing hundreds of books, among them a few good ones.

A few minutes later a worthless servant of Rennie's, not having heard the car come up, shuffled in at the door of the study. He nearly fell backward at seeing the Diwan, the dreaded administrator of the State, sitting in easy confab with his master. He shuffled out again; and went to the few servants at the back to chatter.

"Perhaps our Padre Sahib is not such a cheap Sahib after all. Behold, one after the other, come the Padre Lord Sahib and the Diwan Sahib, to visit him."

But the impression, in the outhouse kitchen, was not lasting. Everyone knew the purpose for which, alone, the Diwan must have come.

"At one hundred and fifty rupees a month," Moropant was articulating, softly and clearly, in the study. He had come, as the Maharaja knew, intending to offer two hundred rupees. But seeing the poverty of the land, he had decided, in a flash, that he could save fifty rupees a month for his master, who was not rich.

"And for what services?" asked Rennie, wondering if he were indeed the man of principle he had thought himself half an hour before.

"For your wife. To act as English reader to his

Highness ; or to the little remaining Rani, if that sounds better. To sit beside the Maharaja, or near him, and keep him occupied during the forenoon, when I am unable to attend, and when he ought not to be left to himself, or to haphazard associates, who may do him harm. You are a man of learning, Mr. Rennie ; that is why I like to talk with you. You know something about the dreadful duty of keeping Louis XIII. amused ; about the long dreary evenings of the aging George II., and ' my Lady Yarmouth, the Comforter.' ”

The Diwan, who had some historical reading, liked to show it.

“ You do not seem to be particularly afraid of insulting me, Moropantao ? ”

“ I am not,” was the quiet answer, accompanied by a full stare.

They were both men to be called athletic, though Moropant was built much the more powerfully. But they had not the slightest disposition to fly at each other's throats. It seemed to be in the air : “ Instead of fighting, let us do business ! ”

Rennie wondered at his own placidity, where a matter of honour seemed to be concerned. Was he indeed growing base ? But one hundred and fifty rupees a month—which could perhaps be increased—added to the other extra hundred rupees a month from the examination ! It would mean everything—certainly a speedy release from this hovel, which pressed upon their souls.

“ It is a harmless and little thing,” pursued Moropant, not quite consistently with his last words, but wishing to make it easy for the Rennies. “ There is another governess already, moving familiarly about the palace, drawing a higher salary than that I have mentioned, yet enjoying the highest character.”

“ Miss Walpole has not my wife's——” He wanted to add “ arresting beauty,” but could not.

“ I quite see. Things are only as they are regarded. I understand that in your country young female typists

are latterly shut up the day long in a master's private room, and not a breath upon their characters. Do not give me your answer now, my friend. Sleep upon it: consult Mrs. Rennie. I believe you have not seen my new house by the river side?"

"No," said Rennie, who had heard of this house, and who felt sheepish.

"Come there to see me to-morrow morning, bringing your answer. I shall have some interesting things to show and tell you. Mind, there is not one of your fellow missionaries to whom I would give this invitation. I regret to seem to press you; but, on the morning following that, I must be off to Guzerat."

With a firm pressure of the hand, he was gone. Rennie had not had a chance before that massive personality.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GAMEKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

VERY wide stretched the sun-scorched khaki landscape on the outskirts of Kanhala. Very narrow looked the Rennies' bungalow, lost in the aching desolation of the scene. It would take a great deal of love to bring partial happiness to such a house. But dissension reigned there.

The Diwan had not realised what it meant when he told Mr. Rennie to consult his wife.

Mrs. Rennie, after putting Cecily again to bed, in the ayah's charge, was preparing to lie down, in order not to lose all of the repose necessary to her at this hour in this season.

The little woman's heart was blithe. While she sang softly, her thoughts went like this :

"What a relief! I am so glad that I summoned courage to make that speech to the Bishop. He is a good man, with all his airy ways, which some do not understand. He has children of his own; he has a father's heart; he will not fail us! He seemed quite to feel for Cecily. We cannot expect to draw the increased pay before July. The household bills must come first. But perhaps I can afford a new evening frock, which I need, from the second month. I wish Albert had not pitched into the Bishop last night; he is always so cock-sure. But the Bishop is above keeping ill-will. I am thankful that he does not know of our debts in the native city. Oh, those awful *sowkars*! Yet four of them were safer than one, whom we do not know. I am troubled at all our debts coming into the hands of

The Gamekeeper's Daughter 165

a new usurer. It was a blow to get his letter this morning ; that was what determined me to speak. And the interest goes mounting up in a way I cannot follow."

For a letter from the moneylender in whose name the Rennies' debts had been bought up by the Diwan, had demanded immediate payment of interest amounting to some hundreds of rupees. Many fall into such hands through their own fault ; but the Rennies had not been extravagant.

"I wonder what the Diwan Moropant can want with Albert? The Sampsons have a terror of him. His master, the Maharaja, is really too great an old fool. He will end by compromising me at the Club, if I am not careful. It would be too much to expect another piece of good luck on such a day."

Rennie entered at this moment, to find his wife removing her corsets, ready to lie down.

He felt a certain shamefacedness at her beauty, as, placing his hands on her bare shoulders, he told her, without circumlocution, of the offer which had just been made to them.

She was not quick of mind or of temper. But her brown eyes, which did not flash readily, grew round with horror as she comprehended.

"And do you mean to say, Albert, that you did not kick the fellow out of the house?"

Rennie, who was no coward, shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Keep your hair on, Lottie. The fellow is the Prime Minister, and, what is more, the maker, of this State. Whether or not you care to consider his offer, evil to him who evil thinks. The beautiful murdered Empress of Austria had men readers to her in various languages, one of whom has published a book of recollections of her."

"What do I care for your empresses and musty memoirs? You know perfectly that it would be thought evil in this evil-minded country. I should lose

166 The Song of Surrender

my character at once. Isn't that enough for you? How do you suppose one of the Assistant Residents would have received such a proposal?"

"I think it very likely the kicking would have been attempted in that case, though I am not sure how it would have resulted. We are not of their class, though we are allowed to circulate among them. There's no use blinking the fact. We are not half so well off as Hilda Walpole, whose family are jolly glad that she can hold a similar position in the palace."

"It is not similar. Miss Walpole is highly qualified. She gives value for the pay she draws, and there is not a breath upon her character. How would it be with me? Why, it means your wife's honour! You are too tame, Albert."

"Perhaps I am. But I see our situation as it is—nearly untenable. Remember this morning's letter. I praised you for pushing the question of my examination with the Bishop. That is one remedy, but it is not enough."

"Mine was an honest remedy," said Mrs. Rennie with set face. "Yours is a dishonest remedy. Oh, what a situation you have brought us into with your conceit, and your superior broad Church views! It's so close and miserable here! I wonder if we shall bring Cecily alive through this hot season? Oh, I wish I'd married the one who loved me! I wish I'd married Ranger!"

This was her resort in extreme, and, it must be admitted, not very frequent, domestic crises. She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed heart-brokenly.

"Ranger would not have let anyone insult me," she burst out, after a minute. "He cared for me, he did! He would have kicked out from his cottage Resident or Diwan who dared to make such an offer. I wish I was with him now! He's ruined himself for me. I wish I was in a two-roomed English cottage, not grilling here, pretending to associate with my betters! It was cooler

The Gamekeeper's Daughter 167

and pleasanter in my father's cottage. Oh, why did I ever want to marry a gentleman? Not that you was much of a gentleman—with your relatives shopkeepers in the next town!"

Her English, a plant of careful watering but uncertain vitality, quickly deteriorated whenever she allowed herself to get excited like this. Rennie, who had been keeping calm, brutally reminded her of this well-known fact, thereby bringing fresh torrents upon his head, with further solecisms which need not be indicated.

"What sort of a home is this to provide for me, and for your child?" Mrs. Rennie went on recklessly. "Look at these crumbling walls! This is the only bungalow in Kanhala hot enough to need punkas; and it hasn't got 'em. What was the use of your sending me to school? You couldn't make a lady of me—as you have sometimes said! You would have done better to carry on your grandfather's business in Min-chester. I bet that whoever has it now makes a better living than you do!"

Rennie, with considerable patience, soothed his wife, patting her, and telling her to behave herself.

But: "That's all you care for me," she declared. "You're a downright bad lot, there! Why don't you go out into the great world, and fight for me? You can't do any fighting except at your desk. Well, then, study your Indian languages and pass this examination. Even a hundred rupees extra will be something; and it will be honest money. But it makes me green with envy to think of the prizes, thousands upon thousands of rupees, that they can get in the big services by passing higher examinations! Why didn't you enter one of the good services—one that it takes a *man* to get into? I don't say the Civil, or the Military; but the Police, or the Forests! Even at that we could have had several times our present wages, and a standing of our own. But you hadn't the sand to do it!"

Whereupon Rennie was provoked to declare that

168 The Song of Surrender

until he lifted her a little, her ideas of military life had been limited to full privates.

"That's right, sneer at me! Ranger would have scorned to do so. He had a true love for me. Where is he wandering now? Anyhow, what made you, with your good start in life, choose the Church, except that you weren't fit for anything else? And in the Church, why enter such a God-forsaken connection as the St. Augustine's?"

If Mrs. Rennie did not often clatter, she undoubtedly did so now to some purpose.

Her babblings seemed to reveal vistas of level English greenery, cottage life, bosky woodlands so unlike this Indian glare! Mrs. Rennie wept as she spoke, and in between. When her husband deprecatingly touched the beautiful bare arms with which he was still in love, she shook him off. He blamed himself for having tactlessly rushed things; and tried to be patient. Really, if she might have behaved better, he might have behaved worse.

"Come, come, Lottie," he said at last, his small eyes glittering; "don't be a fool and a vulgarian. If our marriage was a mistake, we must make the best of it. I have had to do for you as I could, and not as I would: that alone has been bitterness enough for me. You must do your part, and try to help me."

"I do! I do!" she cried. "It's all of no use. Many a time I've borne a smiling face abroad, for your sake, when my heart was breaking. Do you think it's easy for me to go about unadorned, watching the jewels and the fine frocks of other women—even of an unmarried girl like Laura Lowell, who's no better than she ought to be? Virtue doesn't seem to pay, anyhow. Was this a house to bring a young, dainty bride to? I'd like to know who could be contented in such a place as this?"

"Don't make it too hard for me," he said, with a harsh grating in his voice; "or by God, it'll be the worse for you, Lottie!"

The Gamekeeper's Daughter 169

"There, threaten me! Ranger would never have done such a thing. I wish I'd married him! I wish I was dead! I wish I'd never left England! Here I don't have to work with my hands, to be sure; but I can never escape the strain and the effort, which are worse. Married life isn't all honey! Never quite enough to do with! and there never will be, in this mission, even if you pass the exam. Listen to Cecily crying: she isn't well. It is sheer murder, not to take that child to Simla or somewhere, as Mrs. Alder's children could go. Must I lose my baby?—all because you serve no earthly king! You're no good as a parson, either. You don't believe enough; and you say things in a way to shock people. It isn't for your sake, I may tell you, that we've been admitted to Kanhala society. I wish I was out of it all! I wish I was in a green English grave, where I'd feel cool: not the parched-up mounds in your cemetery! I've never had a chance to live yet."

Life seemed a pretty withered and worthless thing to Rennie in that moment, as he recalled its early romance, amid the upbraidings of his wife, and the wailings of his infant from the next room.

The Ranger so often invoked, and appropriately named, was a young under-keeper, with melting eyes who was once supposed to be engaged to the gamekeeper's daughter. When thrown over for the smug Cambridge clergyman, and betterment in life, he had taken to drink, wandering to Canada, and beyond. Rennie's people, though clerical on one side, were, on the other side, small tradesfolk in a small Midland town. The ancestral shop was one chiefly for hosiery. When Rennie, then a curate, was enraptured by his first meetings with the woodland beauty, in her earliest youth, his proceedings, if rash, were not hasty. He had the foresight and the resolution to place her for two years in an excellent finishing school, using up, for this purpose, the last poor hundreds of pounds from his maternal inheritance. Failing to enter his father's

170 The Song of Surrender

mission, he had blundered into his present connection for no deeper reason than that it happened to offer the line of least resistance. It had been a question of the bounty money, not the banner.

Instead of answering his wife provocatively, he was now saying to himself: "It has doubtless been hard on the poor young thing in many ways. Let me try to put myself back at her age. Since she takes it that way, the Diwan's offer must not be considered. There remains only the examination. Though I can fight for her only at my desk, I will there fight for my wife's honour!"

He again patted her, and tried to soothe her: "Cheer up, darling! Believe me, I mean well by you, and not ill. It is not like you to take on in this way."

Yet when she actually struck out at him, he quietly left the room.

But Lottie flung herself upon the bed, moaning, sobbing, wailing aloud, so that all the servants heard her, and knew what must be the reason.

"I wish that I was dead!" she cried, her white shoulders heaving. "I'd drown myself, but the sea is a hundred miles away; and the Krishna isn't deep enough. I wish that I was dead!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE STRICKEN RESIDENT

AFTER leaving the Rennies, the Bishop paid several perfunctory calls, including one on the Sampsons. When he turned up, hot and hungry, at the Residency, it was perilously close upon two o'clock.

He sent in two cards, showing that he wished to see both Miss Lowell and her uncle.

Laura ordered his lordship to be taken to the columned drawing-room upstairs.

"I wonder if he will expect the banqueting hall to be thrown open to him," she flippantly remarked to little Ruth.

Laura went in to receive him, dressed as she had met Raghoba a few hours earlier. But he treated her with so much fatherly kindness, such implicit sympathy with her recent bereavement and her lonely situation, as quite to disarm her prejudice.

"Can I see your uncle?" he asked, after a few minutes.

"Yes, certainly, Bishop," she answered, blushing; "if you will excuse me for a little, while I fetch him."

She went out, and took Colonel Moor from Radhabai. She sponged his face, making him neat in various ways. One of her ready tears fell as she combed out, and made fluffy and handsome, the hair, like spun silver, rising from the forehead, of the cockatoo crest which had been her admiration in childhood.

Clive Moor was a tall man. Nothing could undo that fact. But his calamity had made him shambling.

172 The Song of Surrender

The keen face was already getting bloated. The lower lip, and the entire jaw, hung, instead of being firmly moulded. The fire of the brown eyes, which Laura had long thought so fine, was quenched forever.

Instead, these eyes now followed Laura's for a lead, vacillating, puzzled, pathetic. The hooked nose remained; though one could fancy that it, too, was thickening. There was little to show the beholder that this had lately been a gentleman—much less, a man of command and of distinction. A hook-nosed idiot, uncertain on his feet, shuffling, mumbling: what was worse, making painful, inexplicable, dashes in the air with his fists!

For that was what Colonel Moor was doing much of the time. You would have thought, to behold, that he sought to ward off something which was attacking his eyes. Not otherwise would one strike at hornets attacking. The motion was weirdly suggestive of the iron hornets in the Vindhya Mountains, in the fine Sanskrit legend of King Ranaditya and Queen Ranarambha.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the Bishop half audibly, as he beheld the portent entering the door. "There is no telling what India will do to one. Let me make haste to take my pension, lest the climate of Bombay City make me such another!"

"Shake hands with the Bishop, whom you used to know, unky," said Laura, steering him by the elbow.

"I am glad to see you," said Colonel Moor, extending a hand, and speaking evidently by rote. "Won't you sit down?"

His slow articulation was thick. It suggested the blank verse of Ben Jonson, or of Browning. To try to follow it produced a similar effect, as if of wading in a shallow sea of glue.

"I am grieved, indeed, to see you like this, colonel," said the Bishop, with feeling. "Don't scrabble in the air like that, my dear fellow!"—for the motion was getting on his nerves.

"Uncle Clive does that most of the time," said Laura, rising to close the venetian blinds at a somewhat bright window which was before her uncle's eyes. "I do hope that the motion is merely automatic, as Colonel Fendall says it is. He tells me not to worry, but I cannot help doing so. Uncle's eyes are very sensitive to any glare ; and he seems so unhappy !"

"It does not signify, doubtless," said the Bishop.

But Clive Moor's attention had been attracted to a flashing, great square sapphire, which Bishop Wedderburn wore, as the nearest approach to a purple jewel, set in a massive gold ring.

"Pretty ! pretty !" the stricken Resident was saying. He interrupted the scrabbling motion to stretch his hand after the jewel. The prelate could scarcely believe his eyes.

"He admires your ring," said Laura, shamefacedly. "He would like it to play with ; for he is like that, now."

As one in a dream, Bishop Wedderburn took off the valued gem, and passed it to the idiot, who held it up in the light, tittering.

Then Colonel Moor made as though he would get down on his knees upon the floor. "Radha ! Ruth !" he called.

"No, that is naughty," said Laura, restraining him with a hand upon his shoulder. "To want to play with jewels for marbles when you have company ! For that is uncle's favourite occupation," she explained. "Radha and Ruth are my handmaids, and now his playmates."

At this moment a gong boomed invitingly through the house.

"I want to go to tiffin !" uttered the colonel, on his own. "Good tiffin ! How did I ever do without it ? I want to go to my tiffin : I'm always hungry."

"Hush, unky ! You'd better stay to tiffin with us, Bishop. A week ago you wouldn't have found any. We used to have breakfast as late as possible, and then nothing until tea. But uncle is now so fond of his food

174 The Song of Surrender

that we have breakfast earlier, in order to make room for lunch."

"Thanks, I think I will," said the Bishop. "To tell the truth, Miss Lowell, I'm not sorry to miss Mrs. Law's noontide repast. I hold with some asceticism; but then, the colonel is quite right in feeling that thought should be given to one's food."

He was given a chance to wash his hands. A few minutes later he joined Laura and her uncle at a lavish meal in the ground-floor dining-room.

Colonel Moor had set the purple gem upon an inverted wine glass before him, where he could enjoy it. He was already vigorously tucking away. He did not seem to mind the hornets while he could eat.

"Unky, you shouldn't have begun eating until the Bishop came down," Laura said gently. "He may want to say grace."

"Don't mention it," airily replied his lordship, muttering a brief Latin benediction as he seated himself.

All three had good appetites.

The Resident ate with noticeable greed and splutter. The butler, Jerome, tended him like a child, beginning by tucking a big napkin in at his throat. There were gurglings and spillings. Laura several times had to rise and assist the butler.

"Don't put your fingers in the plate, unky," she would say. "Look at the pretty ring on the glass; and let us feed you."

But that process was not always quick enough.

"You have a good cook, Miss Lowell," remarked the Bishop, with appreciation.

"He does his duty. But Uncle Clive still misses Gaspar."

"Ah, who was that?"

"It is too long a story to tell now," said Laura, the corners of her mouth twitching with merriment. "It would be easier to say what Gaspar was not. He revealed to me my manifest destiny. His reign in this house was brief, but glorious."

"Gaspar, Gaspar," said Colonel Moor, slowly grasping who was being talked of. "He was a wonderful cook—no one like him! I want some of Gaspar's cooking."

"He was not the cook," Laura explained. "But he did everything; and he liked to give the finishing touches to the best dishes. No, you can't find Gaspar by looking around the room, unky. Try to use your fork, there's a dear!"

Colonel Moor's attention soon became unduly fixed upon the decanter of port. He had been given a generous allowance of both beer and wine. It is even to be feared that he was in the lamentable category of Anglo-Indian eaters who take beer with their soup. But now, when he tried to help himself from the decanter, Jerome, at a signal from Laura's eyes, removed all the liquor from the table, after replenishing the Bishop's glass.

Colonel Moor gazed wistfully after the retreating figure of the butler, with the various decanters and bottles.

"Come, uncle, listen," said Laura, bending over him, and making the inverted wine glass clash musically as she touched it with the prelatical sapphire ring.

His heavy face grew intent; then lighted up, as with a ray of sunlight upon very murky clouds. He actually had an idea.

"Have you a string?" he addressed the Bishop eagerly, though with the same thickened utterance.

"God bless my soul, Colonel Moor! a *what*?"

"String, string!"—growing impatient. "Stupid! To play with the pretty ring!"

"He wants to be able to swing the ring, and make the glasses tinkle. Here, uncle, is something much better than any string the Bishop could give you!"

From the shoulder of her muslin dress she extracted a long and narrow ribbon of light blue, with which the Resident was immensely pleased. She inserted it through the ring; then, swinging the latter, made it

176 The Song of Surrender

clash against glasses of various shapes, empty or partly filled. A whole gamut of tinkling sounds could thus be produced. Dipping her finger in water, she ran it around the rim of her uncle's finger bowl. The sight was pretty, as well as the sounds.

The Bishop was intensely interested. He felt himself, as he liked to, at the centre of important happenings.

"And this object," he reflected, "is responsible for the peace of the Southern Maratha country at a time of notorious disaffectation and tumult! And only I have had the penetration to discover the fact. What havocs has the Indian climate, both moral and physical, wrought! Why, this is a sensational situation! All the Assistant Residents are at a distance, save for that useless youngster, Washington. The Residency, the British rule here, is indefensible, empty, betrayed—at the mercy of its foes! I have no equal within hundreds of miles to whom I can speak on such matters. But the Viceroy will be profoundly grateful when I reveal them to him. I daresay it will secure me Delhi."

His head went backwards, at the well-known angle of levity. He settled the purple skull cap upon his Napoleonic brow. He reached out for the decanter of port, which was not.

"Does your uncle, Miss Lowell, know who and what he is?"

"Alas! I fear not, Bishop. I wish to conceal nothing from anybody; and you have given me confidence in you. Perhaps you can best satisfy yourself by asking my uncle questions."

"I will do so; thanks. Colonel Moor, look at me. Do you know who you are?"

But the Resident was intent in the game of the dangled ring, and the glasses. When actively amused like this, he did not seem to mind the enemies that attacked his eyes.

"Uncle," said Laura firmly. "Look up, and answer. He wants to know who you are."

"The old silly! Does he think I don't know? or doesn't he know?"

"Unky," said Laura sweetly, sadly, fixing his poor wavering brown eyes with her violet ones. "You must not answer like that; it's naughty. Tell the kind Bishop who you are."

He seemed unable to withdraw his eyes from hers; or to do other than she bade him.

"Why," came the slow utterance, yet with some sense of amusement; "as if the whole world doesn't know that I am Lord Clive!"

"Ah," said the Bishop, entering into the spirit of the thing; "how did you become so?"

"King George made me so for winning the great battle—what was the name?—Pilashi. I could not do so again; I must have exhausted my brains in the effort. Mir Jaffier helped me. He is a good Prince. He gives me emeralds to play marbles with. He has promised to let me dip for some more in his earthenware jar, which contains hundreds."

"What does all this mean, Miss Lowell? Who is Mir Jaffier?"

"Is it not sad?" said Laura, her eyes shining through tears. "What would Aunt Milly say to hear him? For a week unky has talked like this. You know that he is descended from Lord Clive, whose name he bears. Uncle Clive always aspired to do something half so fine in India. I am sorry to think that he sometimes wearied me by talking about it. As for Mir Jaffier, that is unky's name for the Raja Amar Rao, who has plenty of emeralds, and who has given me some."

She gazed straight into the prelate's eyes as she spoke, looking as though she would like to blush; but she did not.

"What!" cried the Bishop. "Emeralds, by handfuls, given into a British Residency? And more solicited? It were not well that that were known. The trail grows hotter and hotter. But whom does Colonel Moor take you for, Miss Lowell?"

178 The Song of Surrender

"Who am I, unky? There, leave the sapphire alone for a moment and look up and answer."

"Your name," answered the colonel hesitatingly, "is Laura. You are the slave girl of my best friend, Mir Jaffier, who has set you to attend on me for a while."

This time Laura flushed all over, a carmine which was soon gone.

"Shall we go upstairs?" she suggested.

Arrived once more in the drawing-room, Colonel Moor wanted to go off with Radhabai and Ruth who awaited him on the threshold. But he also wanted to take away with him for their amusement, who admired it much, the Bishop's sapphire ring, suspended on Laura's blue ribbon.

"Unky," said Laura, "thank the Bishop for loaning you his handsome ring; and give it back to him."

"I don't want to give up my ring," he blubbered.

There stood the hook-nosed, shambling idiot, the tears coursing down his flabby cheeks at the thought of surrendering his flashing plaything.

"Don't make him cry," the Bishop interposed. "Play with the ring as long as you like, colonel; and good-bye. Miss Lowell, you can, perhaps, get it quietly from him while he sleeps, and send it around to the Mission Bungalow to-morrow morning"—which was what was done.

"'From Marlborough's eyes the tears of dotage flow'" the Bishop quoted to himself, with much satisfaction.

But this was no dotage. The colonel was forty-nine. He was led out of the room by little Ruth, pulling at the ends of the ribbon which ran through the ring, which he held between his fingers. He would have liked Laura to come too. Many a puzzled, reluctant look did he throw back at the beautiful slave of love as he shuffled out at the door.

"I cannot say that I quite care for all these native associations," the Bishop observed.

"I have let you see my uncle exactly as he is," said Laura. "What do you advise?"

"One thing I feel safe in advising, my child. Send for a European nurse, qualified in mental cases, from one of the great hospitals in Bombay or Poona. She will be a comfort to you, a help to your uncle, a buffer against needless misconstructions of various kinds."

"Thank you, Bishop, I will think about it," meaning that she would consult Amar Rao. "There is something seriously wrong with unky, is there not?"

"I fear so. This has evidently been coming on for a long time," he added, owlishly.

"But what is it?"

The ready tears were in her eyes. They had not sat down after coming upstairs.

"Ah, that the secular physicians must tell you. I am ignorant in such matters. Yet what I have, I bestow upon you freely. Not because, from all that I can gather, you specially deserve it, dear child, but because you need it, I will give you my episcopal blessing."

It is known that Laura was not quick in the uptake; and that, at least in India, she almost lacked elementary powers of self-defence.

She stood opposite the Bishop for a moment, questioning him with wide, wondering sapphire eyes. "Down! Down!" he was near saying to so much grace and loveliness. Then, from an impatient gesture, she understood that he expected her to kneel before him.

How little she cared for his tenets may be inferred from the fact that she was about to abjure them all for the faith of her Hindu lover. Yet it was in her sweet and womanly nature to assent always, when easily possible, rather than dissent. She reflected that the proffered blessing could do as little harm as good; that the Bishop had been nice to her; that, in any case, he was a *guru*, a superior religious teacher, such as the East tends to honour, whatever his faith.

180 The Song of Surrender

Sinking upon one knee, by way of compromise or comfort, she bowed her comely head. The Bishop laid his hand upon the tawny locks, with all their wealth of little curls above forehead and ears, and unctuously uttered the formula of blessing which he had learned to pronounce with some effect.

"I wonder that they count him such a fool," Laura said to herself as soon as he was gone.

But Bishop Wedderburn had been a wise young man before he became one of the hardest bargains of the Indian Government. He had dealt once with men. As was said of a retired officer, with not a very good record in the army, and with a large hennery, from the command of men he had become a commander of fowls.

From Mahableshwar, two or three days later, the Bishop sent to the Supreme Government an account of the state of things at the Kanhala Residency so exaggerated that, added to his reputation, it failed to secure any credence whatsoever.

"O chuck it into the files," said a weary Secretary. "If things were half so bad as that at Kanhala, wouldn't India be ablaze with it? It's one of Wedderburn's yarns, his mare's nests, his visions. That man sees purple, and sky-pink, and all sorts of prelatical colours. When will he take his pension?"

The Kanhala Club that evening, in the hours preceding and following sunset, had brought together a company wider than would meet at any dinner, or in any heaven. It included more than one religion and social grade. Such was the laudable intention of the committee.

Here were several missionary families, of both sorts, who were encouraged to join in the games by a rate of subscription reduced for their benefit. Mrs. Rennie was not out this afternoon. Her husband, who had no use for the Club, had the manliness to take his own line, going, at this hour, for the long solitary walks which he

considered necessary for his mental work, although they contributed to his reputation of being a smug.

Amar Rao had come out, bringing with him his stalwart member of parliament, with their two little boys. This native Prince, at any rate, was not looked upon as so much dirt by the Europeans of the station. Even in Residency society (from which the Residents were rather conspicuously absent just now) he was the object of something like a toadying admiration.

Others were present, each bringing with him, or her, a sacred personality, the centre of the universe. However wilted by the hot evening, they were so many individual Bostons, so many hubs of the world.

"Thank God the worst month of the hot season is over!" Mrs. Sampson was remarking, as she fanned herself in the small outer room of the modest Club structure, known as the library. Here the babu, or native librarian, waited attentive; and here the ladies would linger for a word of gossip, on leaving or before entering their carriages or motors.

To her approached—oh rapturous moment!—the one parliamentarian of her life!

"I am glad to hear it is over, madam. You were saying that the hottest month——"

"Is April, undoubtedly," she instructed, grasping at the chance of acquaintance. "The heat of May is tempered by clouds, and by occasional showers."

Ruddy, tall, broad-shouldered, with bright, watchful eyes, Charles Hozier stood before Mrs. Sampson, whom he had long known by sight. He twisted the luxuriant waxed moustaches which were the weak point in his equipment, giving to his good looks a suggestion of the barber's block, recalling the fierce moustachios which, from the Teutonic Emperor, have passed to Prussian porters in third-rate provincial hotels.

Hozier had learned the value of his magical addition. When it was first proposed to give Arts degrees without classical studies, the unkindly remark was made that the result would not be A.B., but might pass as something

182 The Song of Surrender

like A.'B.' (A prime, B prime). So there was the detraction, the mark of difference, embedded in the epithet of Labour M.P. Yet even thus it might impose, or give pleasure, in circles geographically or socially remote.

So, knowing that it would please Beatrix, Mr. Hozier chatted for a few minutes with Mrs. Sampson on that neutral ground ; even sitting down beside her, ignoring the indignity of his returned card.

Mrs. Sampson instantly found a congenial subject of conversation, lest the legislator should be lonely. Though she had not before spoken to an M.P., she (such was her distinguished destiny !) was quite intimate with the sister of one. And there, within sight through the doorway, sat the faded vision of Miss Panton, the grey shawl still about her shoulders—it was said she slept in it. But the eyes were set in the familiar frozen stare ; the ashen features were rigid with disapproval at Mrs. Sampson's weakness.

"Even our hidden station, Mr. Hozier, boasts some blue-blooded members whom you would enjoy knowing. Miss Panton's brother, the Admiral, is about to marry a lord's daughter. But I forget, you must associate quite familiarly with Sir John Panton."

"Bless you, he wouldn't know the likes of me !" came the response, with a frank outburst of musical laughter. "Nor would I have him know me. He is just such another gaunt image as his sister, but in better health ; barren to the bone, though with some bleak learning ! If that's what you call blue blood, I esteem it no more than the blue milk of East London, which I fractionally represent."

While Mrs. Sampson was digesting this shocking sentiment, there ran up to Hozier the prettiest tiny boy. It was pleasant to watch the relations between the motherless child and his father, who made a companion of him. Leslie was well-grown and strong, yet only five.

At the heels of the white child, and not very much

larger, although he was eight or nine, came a brown boy of more delicate beauty, more obvious breeding, with satin skin, lustrous eyes, long eyelashes.

"I want Leslie to play with me in the badminton court," he declared imperiously, in English. "He is putting it on, saying that he's sleepy—at this hour!"

It was six o'clock. The speaker was the little Rao Sahib, probable heir to the kingdom of Kanhala, around whom such intrigues were woven, and whose name was known throughout India. If there was a detraction to Hozier's enjoyment as Amar Rao's guest in the Lakshmi Villas, the shining Abode of Wealth, it was the way in which his little son had been monopolised, almost snatched from him, to be the enforced playmate of an older and stronger child, of different standing and alien civilisation.

"Tired, sonny?" he inquired.

And: "No, not tired," was the brave answer; but the little head drooped against the father's arm.

"That child should be in bed," Mrs. Sampson remarked, her motherly instincts aroused, and drawing him to herself. "Why did you bring him out, after so long and trying a day?"

"That was not quite in my hands," said Hozier embarrassed. "But I'm going to take him back now, anyhow."

He rose, and set Leslie high up on his shoulder.

"It's a pity for you to lose all the games, and the talk, Mr. Hozier."

"I'll not lose them, Mrs. Sampson. I'll run to the palace with Leslie, and be back in half an hour, see if I'm not."

"Why, you never mean to say that you're going out in the sun afoot?"

"I shall be glad of the exercise. The sun isn't harmful at this time of day"—though all would not have endorsed that.

Amar Rao, Mrs. Sampson's prince by nature and by birth, and her husband's patron, suave, handsome,

184 The Song of Surrender

veiling the fires of his black eyes, now approached his guest.

"My Rao Sahib tells me, Hozier, that you want to take your little boy to bed without delay? Don't go yourself, send him in my car."

But even Amar Rao's car was demobilised at the moment, the Italian chauffeur having wandered off, justifiably enough, upon being told that he would not be needed for an hour or two.

"Don't make much of it, Sir Amar Rao, I beg of you," said Hozier with decision. "I'll carry the boy home myself, make him over to Balaji [naming a responsible palace servant], and be back here in a jiffy."

Amar Rao was himself too fond of personal prowess and exertion to oppose this resolution.

Mrs. Sampson had been hastily whispering with Beatrix.

"Let me ask him to tea to-morrow, Beaty dear."

"No, mother, be firm!" said Beaty, who had much ado not to laugh. She knew that her mother would be asking him to dinner by next week; that she would no longer have to conduct her meetings with Mr. Hozier beside the dusty prickly pear hedges. The charming M.P. was making an unofficial conquest of official English society in Kanhala, much like Wilkes upon the Continent, a century and a half earlier.

"If I could only offer him my blue car!" Mrs. Sampson was saying.

But settling Leslie securely upon his shoulders, embracing his forehead, the strong young father was off at a positive run. It produced a good impression upon all who saw it, except common natives, who could not at all understand running when you might ride.

It was something over a mile to Amar Rao's palace across the river; first up the river to the lower of the city bridges, then down again: and as far back once more. Yet Hozier did it nimbly, without turning a hair. In half an hour he was back again, not perceptibly blown.

When he returned to the Club he beheld a spectacle in startling contrast to that which he had presented.

Laura had brought her uncle to the Club, which was but in a corner of the Residency compound, a quarter of a mile in a straight line, hardly half a mile as the carriage drive wound, in the little low victoria which was part of the superannuated lumber of the stables.

She led the melancholy, shuffling idiot, already bloated, stooping, to a comfortable seat in the billiard room. She had to keep hold of his right hand most of the time, or he would scrabble with it in the air, at his invisible assailants. And what was that, that he presently took out of his pocket, and sought to play with, swinging it too and fro? It was, it was a great sapphire ring, strung upon a light blue ribbon!

Amar Rao came up, silkily, soothingly, and stood gazing upon his handiwork.

Many Europeans came forward, to greet Colonel Moor, or to pay their respects to him, according to their positions. When Laura looked close into his face, strengthening him with her eyes, and told him to answer, or to do this or that, he could generally respond. She appeared all that was sweet, devoted, self-effacing. Though she had been unanimously dropped from Residency society, she could not be ignored here, within her own grounds.

"I cannot tell you what is the matter with Uncle Clive," she repeatedly said. "I fear that he is very unhappy. Please try not to speak to him, for it disturbs him."

The Sampsons, who knew what it was, kept away, with heavy hearts; for they were good souls, beneath their relentless snobbishness. Young Captain Washington, too, who saw the Resident daily, though he did not understand, abstained from pressing upon him in public.

These showed right feeling; as almost all were genuinely grieved to see the condition to which their Resident was reduced.

186 The Song of Surrender

But Miss Panton, without budging from the seat where she had sat since her arrival, glared at Laura with a malignant gaze. If odic force can injure, that evil eye should have hurt. From Mrs. Moor's first talk about Laura coming out to India, Miss Panton had consciously resented her existence as an affront to morality. Her mere birth was a triumph of light-hearted naughtiness, which a lifetime of prayer and fasting could scarcely have expiated. But that the by blow of the slain Pro-consul should queen it in the Residency : this was immorality set in high places, flagrant, unashamed !

The scandals in connection with Amar Rao had made the barren woman feel, at times, that she could shriek aloud in the tension of her nerves, in her longing for an instant judgment upon sexual sin. And it had come !

Her righteous hatred gave to Miss Panton more insight than to all the sweet-souled Christians there.

"I believe there is some crime here," she was saying behind her pallid lips. "It is for Miss Lowell, or perhaps by her, that it has been committed. How long, O God, how long ?"

At one time Laura called the Rao Sahib to her, and tried to set the little Prince to whirling the sapphire ring to amuse Colonel Moor. But he pulled away fractiously.

"I don't want to play with a fool-man, a Veda," he announced.

Laura, after keeping Colonel Moor for half an hour in the billiard room (there were but the two rooms) led him, and made him look in at the various courts for games. She seemed to wish to show him as prominently and deliberately as possible, as if to demonstrate that there was no deception, no concealment, no foul play.

Then, seating herself beside him in the low victoria, she drove away, amid the respectful silence of the Europeans who looked on, and through a small crowd of natives who had gathered unauthorised on the private road.

The sensation of that first appearance was immense.

The Stricken Resident 187

The mere sight of a high official needing to drive that distance was pitiful, unworthy. Men of both races reflected that the Residency was a stronghold laid bare, a garrison incapable of making resistance.

Thenceforth Laura brought her uncle in the same way to the Club of an evening (for which Colonel Fendall commended her) not regularly, but occasionally.

Nothing could now still the importunate inquiry among Europeans, which any native could have answered :

“WHAT has happened to Colonel Moor?”

CHAPTER XV

THE PRIME MINISTER

"YOU may think me a man of power, Mr. Rennie, an administrator," said the Chief Secretary. "Upon my word, I am nothing of the sort. I am putty, I am a tool in the hands of a man twenty years younger than myself, but a born statesman. There is only one man in this State; but he is a tremendous one!"

"You mean the Diwan Moropant," said Rennie, wincing.

"I do. There is no man like him! It is he who, within eight years, has built up the State from the deliquescence into which it had been allowed to fall. Oh, if you could have seen and heard some of the things I have! Think of Moropant's predecessor, as Private Secretary, murdered at ten o'clock, as he was walking home from the palace, after his day's work! A dagger found in his back, and no other trace. That man had made himself obnoxious to Amar Rao: I will say no more. He had tried to serve the Maharaja, but without power or understanding. Imagine such things happening to-day! It is Moropant who has put a bridle in Amar Rao's mouth."

"It is easy to see on whose side you are, Mr. Rosario. Yet that is not the general European opinion."

"General European opinion be damned! opinion of asses! Because Amar Rao shoots, and plays tennis with them, and has that silken manner—'Oh, if my deluded brother would only allow me to reform this backward State, how many things I would do for Europeans!'—they think he embodies enlightenment.

What can your stiff-necked officials, with their 'hems!' and their 'haws!' lunching on a ramrod, too proud to speak to the people, know of the inner workings of a Native State? Colonel Moor was not that sort, I know; and yet how utterly out of touch with things!"

"Not so much as you think, perhaps," said Rennie, who remembered recent remarks in Residency society, straws to show that the orthodox opinion was setting towards the Maharaja. "Sir Amar Rao is not merely silken. His eyes show, at times, that he has the pride of Lucifer."

"Amar Rao is many things—an exploiting capitalist, a sportsman, a lover! But his vast pride will never be satisfied until he has founded a dynasty of his own. Brother may not succeed brother in India. Yet Idar (a petty State, when all is told), the only case in our generation of a new ruling line having been founded by a younger brother, will not let our cadet sleep. I don't believe Amar Rao knows what he wants, except to dominate, and to pile up his lakhs, which are fast becoming crores. He might be content if he could see his young son established upon the throne of Kanhala, and rule once more in his name."

"I have heard just as bad things said of Moropant."

"That was by the Europeans who cannot see. But their masters, the men at the top, think differently. It is not for nothing that he has been summoned just now to meet the Viceroy in Guzerat: the lion-hunting is all bluff. In short, Moropant is a wonderful fellow. He is as straight as steel in all public matters, or I wouldn't serve him as I do. I am his partisan, tooth and nail. But your road diverges here, Mr. Rennie."

The gigantic Chief Secretary of Kanhala State paused, holding Rennie's hand, while his wise eyes crinkled kindly. He knew of the young husband's temptation, or trouble. It was for him to strengthen his master's hands; not to hinder the game. Yet he felt privately sorry for Rennie.

The two had met upon their twilight walk; and

190 The Song of Surrender

had returned to the cantonments together. Rennie, depressed as he might well be after the scene with his wife, was content to keep within his shell, chiefly listening to Rosario, whose conversation was prized by the discerning, even in Residency society. The Portuguese Chief Secretary would not have been allowed in the outer courts of the Club, where the missionaries were welcomed. It certainly was droll, that alleged outward route of his family from Europe, avoiding Goa! Yet he was a man of many times the substance, intellect, power, of the Reverend Albert Rennie, who, for a little longer, went everywhere.

"Well, good-night," he said, with a cordial, comforting smile upon the massive features which were so dark as almost to be brown. "This too shall pass," he was near adding. Pombal Xavier Rosario had seen generations of them come and go—of the men whom his master, the young Prime Minister, used.

"He only is a living man: the rest are gliding shades!" he muttered, as he walked away into the gathering twilight.

Rennie did not feel himself to be much more than a gliding shade as he made his way, the next morning, afoot in the hot sun, to his appointment with Moropant, which he had not taken the trouble to mention to Mr. Rosario.

He seemed to be a minnow, a shrimp, in the jaws of a whale, when the minister welcomed him.

The same brutal mask of a face when in repose, the same delightful illumination of it when he spoke! There was, about Moropant's entire appearance, a compactness, solidity, and strength. In his European costume, he lacked the flimsiness of aspect of so many of the best natives. It was often hard to believe that he was a native when one heard him speaking with such fascination in an English far more nearly perfect than is often encountered in Western India. His presence and his dress were conspicuously neat. But everything about him bespoke power.

Rennie was a guest this morning. The subject about which he had called was scrupulously not mentioned.

Instead, he was taken over the front rooms only of the big house, somewhat tawdry with varnish and adornments, which Moropant had lately put up for one of the sights of the river bank. Here were books which were upholstery, and also books which were good mental food. The grounds were befouled by Hindu holy men, past whom Rennie walked gingerly. How could the enlightened minister endure them? Yet he, who opposed their undue influence with the Maharaja, dared not refuse them shelter, or be entirely without their countenance. Their presence might have been a warning of the incalculable forces here concerned.

The hall, and other rooms, were decorated with some stately trophies, all shot by himself. As one entered, a black bear of a good deal more than human height, upreared on its hind legs, threatened the intruder: this had fallen during Moropant's recent exile in Kashmir. He showed with pride a tiger's head and skin which recalled two hours at midnight spent with the Vicereine upon a machan in the Kanhala jungles, upon the occasion of the Viceregal visit two years earlier. There were Himalayan eagles of immense stretch of wing, a sort of Lammergeier.

But all the spoils were those of carnivorous animals only, for the slaying of which a case can be made out even among Hindus.

"I have not wandered as far as Karamojo for wild elephant," remarked Moropant. "I have not had the privileges of Sir Amar Rao, not being a Prince. But when I have brought back a lion from the desert of Guzerat, I shall have pretty well exhausted the possibilities of the Indian continent."

"I hope you will," said Rennie perfunctorily.

Moropant talked about himself, as a man may do with grace when showing another about his premises. He was a stubborn worker and a linguist. He told how he often spent ten hours a day writing and dictating in

not less than five different languages, of which Sanskrit was one. Rennie felt his book knowledge of the mother speech to be a very poor thing in comparison to such familiarity. Yet it was a point in Moropant's spacious nature, that he always appeared to have abundant leisure.

His drawing-room was filled with presentation portraits of former Residents in Kanhala and their wives, and of more exalted persons, some bearing famous names. He had lost in youth, he said, a dearly loved wife ; and had no actual son. But he had married again ; and meanwhile was lavishly supporting two of his nephews. The Hindu joint family system seemed to be here illustrated at its best.

The Diwan brought in, with beaming affection, in his arms, a half-naked nephew of two years, whose cheek Rennie had to touch. The other nephew was a student, who had private instruction from the College professors, drove about in a dog-cart of his own, and was known as "the little Diwan."

Still holding the baby, Moropant recalled an incident of his own childhood. He told prettily how he had, at that age, acquired the slight but distinctive scar on his forehead. It was in his father's garden, beside a shallow artificial pond. The crawling baby had seen something that attracted him in the water ; had clutched at it ; and had hit his forehead against the rocky bottom. It was the earliest recollection of a vice-like memory.

There was a framed painting, made by a good artist, from a photograph after death, of Moropant's father. A thin, keen face of an administrator, unlike his son's, and with a pointed white beard, stained quite yellow from the use of tobacco. The artist had at first omitted this characteristic, but Moropant had asked to have it put in. This father had been created a titular Raja at the end of his career ; which showed what the son might aspire to.

Rennie, though sullen and miserable, was interested in spite of himself. Instead of trying to appear remark-

able in any improbable way of his own, he asked leading questions, which brought out a clearer account than he had yet heard of the Maharaja's legendary troubles, some decades earlier.

"As I was saying," continued Moropant Ghatgay, "that was everything that our Maharaja ever had to do with the Russians. Their game is now played out in Asia—however they may cherish, at home, the great hope of the convalescent. Nothing that they might now do could well compromise the humblest tributary in India. But in those days they had rather recently brought about the Afghan War by their intrigues. There were Russians in the air. Even Kanhala was not considered too far away for their ambitions. And so my beloved master became involved. Not seriously, I think you will admit. But there were two Residents here in succession, whose names afterwards became famous; hard, unsympathetic men, who took the worst possible view of my master's mistake. Essential justice was never done. I was a child when these things happened. But I could show you the record of them in many an old book and document."

"Old, unhappy, far-off things," murmured Rennie.

"They were most unhappy for all concerned, save one man, at a later date. That was the encroaching younger brother, who was about my age. Even as a youth, Sir Amar Rao was a master of intrigue. I have told you of the deplorable condition in which the State was at my master's accession. His father had not been able to prevent something like chaos at the end. Nor had my master, whose life has been that of a recluse and a devotee, the qualities required to grapple with the situation. The country was, frankly, in a bad condition. Those dacoities had already begun which it was one of my first duties to suppress, near twenty years later."

"As you lately suppressed the Anarchists!"

"Exactly. When the right time came. When I first came to the Maharaja, eight years ago, merely as

194 The Song of Surrender

Private Secretary, on five hundred rupees a month, Sir Amar Rao had long been Regent. He early made capital out of the chaos which he had found in Kanhala, and which he did little to amend. He represented it as the misfortune, rather than the fault, of his brother. 'My deluded brother,' 'my misguided brother,' was even then his phrase. You may have heard him say the same at the Club. 'My poor brother does not understand such things; he ought to be protected from himself.' The Maharaja Balwant Rao had been practically set aside. He was as nearly deposed as could be, without the name of it. Thus Amar Rao entered upon his long mastery in the State, first as Regent, and later as President of the Council of State. If I may say it, I was the first who dared to lift my head to him. It was not until some twenty months ago that his Highness became President of his own Council."

Rennie was aware of the general process, much of which had taken place since his own coming to Kanhala: how Amar Rao had steadily dwindled, as this matchless servant brought the Maharaja forward and upward, into his rightful place.

"Amar Rao seems to be the enemy."

"I do not say that of my dear master's brother. Yet there are two camps in the State, the Raja Amar Rao's, and that which, for lack of a better name, must be called my camp. Those who frequent the one, do not enter the other."

With some awe, Rennie felt that there was not much doubt to which camp he was predestined, if he must choose either. Here was one who, without Amar Rao's obvious romantic qualities, had far more dignity, solidity, command. Though everything was handsome about him, and though he was known to be accumulating a fortune by methods considered licit in the East, he made no pretension to compete with Amar Rao's outward splendour. But the future seemed to be increasingly his. Moropant was not one for any aerial flights. His very figure, compact and agile although

burly, familiar to all, was of the earth, upon which he squarely stood, drawing invisible strengthening from it.

"How is it, Diwan Sahib," Rennie ventured to ask, "that a man of your more than enlightenment, your great gifts and vision, can be bound by some of the trivialities of caste and creed which you still keep up?"

"Such considerations may not be as trivial as they seem to your materialistic Western mind, Mr. Rennie. Although honorary chaplain in Kanhala, you are a secularist. But I have a mystical side. What would you say if I told you that, at the end of my worldly career, perhaps after twenty years, it is my dream to become a Sadhu, a sort of missionary among my own people, who have many customs which need to be reformed?"

"Impossible! You cannot mean it!"

"Excuse me, I never meant anything more seriously in my life. Are you, a Sanskrit scholar, blind to all the pleasantness and pathos of the canonical ending to the life of the Brahmin householder, who, when his sons are grown up, retires to contemplation in the shade of the jungle? I would not be the first Indian Prime Minister, even in our own days, who has done such a thing."

"Extraordinary!"

"Not at all. Yet in my case, if I live to that period of life, I should wish to remain with my own people, as it is also permissible to do; moving among them more freely than I can in my day of power; and seeking to work upon their minds for their good. Do you not believe that there are reforms, ameliorations of cruel, hard and fast customs, which I have it at heart to bring about?"

"That is not the reputation which you have borne hitherto; but that of a reactionary."

"Ah, how little do you Europeans know anything Indian! Would you suppose, now, that from the foundation of the dynasty there have been eunuchs in the Kanhala palace? A horrible custom, not Hindu at

196 The Song of Surrender

all—one of the taints, like the attempted seclusion and veiling of women, which our ruling families have taken from Islam. It was not until a year ago that I was able to chase the last eunuch from my master's household!"

"*Shabas!*" Rennie could not help exclaiming.

"You like that? Yet I had striven for six, seven years, before I was strong enough to bring it about without convulsion. It is not well, in an Indian palace, to be very far ahead of possibilities; or to take up anything as a grievance when you do not mean, in good earnest, to have it reformed. What was the motto which Walpole never found a silly one?"

"*Quieta non movere,*" answered Rennie, with the docility of a schoolboy.

"That is safe, if sometimes ignoble. My aim is a little better than that. Only give me time: Time and I are two! *Col tempo*: who could think that the Italians were once an Imperial race? *Festina lente*. I would lose my influence with my people, and with his Highness, if I did not conform to the chief traditional requirements. I have to go slowly in many respects, in order that I may take my followers with me."

"It is a mighty work, and a thrilling, that you have before you. What may you not do in twenty years? But you should visit Europe, Diwan Sahib. That will be a revelation to you; however fully you may have possessed things with your eyes, and with your intellect, already. For when you do go you will move, not as a student or a stranger, but as a statesman among statesmen. Yet you cannot carry these caste rules with you."

"No. Nor shall I try to bring them back with me. Caste, once broken, can never be recovered, in the fullest sense; nor need a man be a less good Hindu for that. The year in Europe which I hope for will be a great tempering of my mind, when it comes. After that I expect to eat freely with Europeans, as I shall have done in Europe. But until then, it seems but right to follow the observances which I have inherited, and to which my countrymen give such weight."

What could be more reasonable, more tellingly moderate? Rennie had a constant difficulty in realising that this speaker, this energetic intellect that joyously gave itself so many different forms, was not European. He would have been still more impressed could he have seen Moropant Ghatgay, half an hour later, in the company of several English engineers, mastering, in the interests of the State, the technical difficulties of a tunnel, through a great mountain, which had to be pierced at different levels from opposite sides, meeting in the centre.

It was certainly intercourse of the most stimulating, such as Rennie did not often get. Yet why was he sitting there? He flushed hot as he realised that, of all his versatile manifestations, Ghatgay presented to himself one of the least creditable. The Maharaja must be kept from mischief or from meddling in State affairs; his mornings must be occupied, without fear of drink or of hostile influence; therefore Mrs. Rennie was offered the position of English Reader to his Highness.

Rennie also recalled the detailed stories which went about among Europeans, of the way in which the Prime Minister consolidated his influence with the Maharaja by a sustained intrigue with the senior Maharani, Indravati.

"Here is a friend of mine, Mr. Rennie, whom you will like to meet."

The Diwan introduced a highly orthodox Brahmin follower, who at that moment glided barefoot into the room, in fluttering draperies. This man, although a professed fanatic, had a singularly gentle manner, and a winning smile, upon a worn, ascetic face. The talk was about religion, meaning practically religious austerities.

One apt comparison the Broad Churchman always remembered, uttered in careful English:

"You say that you do not care for the taste of religion of any kind; that you find it dull, flat, and unprofitable. That is because your palate has not been educated, because you have not had enough experience. So you may imagine a man who has always been brought up to

198 The Song of Surrender

eat quinine. He thinks it the sweetest thing in the world—as do you secularists. But only let him once taste sugar, which is religion, and he will find out what true sweetness is ! ”

Ghatgay, who had stood by smiling approvingly, now conducted Rennie to the door, saying good-bye. The subject of Mrs. Rennie's appointment had not been mentioned.

At the outer gate Rennie turned and looked back, although he wished to return. The Diwan, beholding, hastened up to him. Rennie took in that vigorous figure of the youthful minister, in becoming khaki uniform, running, not walking, along the driveway, a pleasant smile upon his face.

“Did you perhaps wish to speak of the Court appointment ? ”

“We have no need of it,” Rennie answered, in a cheeky Marathi idiom.

“Ah, it does not matter.”

“Let me work for my wife's honour ! ” Rennie was saying as he walked away in the heat of the sun.

But he did not know that he was being handled by the Compleate Angler.

CHAPTER XVI

FROM A TOWER

"I WANT the Nawab Mir Jaffier," said Clive Moor, with his troubled articulation, yet fretfully. "I want him to give me some more round emeralds, as he has so often promised."

"Yes, Lord Sahib," said little Ruth, smiling at his delusion, but humouring him in it, as she would a fractious baby. "It is very wrong of the Nawab Sahib not to do the thing promised. I do not think he will be long. I heard the footsteps of their returning horses even now: our Missybai will not be a moment."

For Laura still, for a while, rode abroad daily upon Star with her lover, to the futile horror of the station; at his request maintaining, so far as possible, her life as a European in the Residency.

"After I have made him King of Bengal he need not grudge me emeralds with which to play marbles, need he?" Colonel Moor went on slowly, with a puzzled look. "When was it that I did all that? But Mir Jaffier presumes too far. Laura, whom he gave me for the chief of my slave girls, he is all the time taking away by himself."

The colonel, noticeably more bloated and shambling, sat upon the fine matting, hemmed with red cloth, on the floor of Laura's upstairs room, where he had been playing at knucklebones, with Ruth, with the half dozen fairly round stones out of the fourteen emeralds given to Laura by Amar Rao. But he now sat disconsolate. He began to scrabble in the air at invisible hornets, as always when not kept amused.

200 The Song of Surrender

"Do not do that, Lord Sahib," said Ruth, who fluttered about him, in her silk sari, like a bright butterfly. Rather sweetly, she took his hands in her tiny ones; then held them under one hand, while she passed the silken palm of the other hand over his troubled brow in a sort of massage, which soothed him. Those were mistaken, in Kanhala society, who averred that Colonel Moor was at all neglected or mistreated by his handmaids.

"Cheer up, Lord Sahib," she was saying. "You shall have the shining green stones; and all will be well. Behold, here they come!"

It was in that position that Laura and Amar Rao, standing in the doorway, found them.

The lovers were certainly a handsome pair. Amar Rao, albeit in correct English attire save for the cap which he kept upon his shaven head, looked indubitably Indian. Perhaps, with the luxuriance of blue-black moustache, the glow of skin and of eyes, he was too much like the idealisations of Krishna to suit some tastes. He had turned under his finger the ring with the softly glowing pink diamond, which Colonel Moor was apt to try to get away from him.

Laura still had her hunting crop in the hand with which she held up her blue costume, matching so well with her eyes. Exercise and physical well-being had given her the blush-rose colour which her admirers always lamented did not stay.

Dropping the whip, she rushed to her uncle, stooped to kiss him, pressing the poor silvered head, which suffered so much, against her body. Amar Rao tolerantly allowed, for a little, these caressing ways, which were not in accord with Indian custom.

The revenges of time! It was upon that same spot on the matting, Laura remembered, that Colonel Moor, not many weeks before, had surprised her, with such serious results, at the same childish game of emeralds for marbles, with little Ruth. She no longer got upon the floor for the fascinating sport. Her uncle did that now;

while she looked after him. Since her happiness in love she had grown insensibly more mature, more matronly, in little ways.

Laura helped her uncle to his feet. With aquiline nose but faded eyes, with eager speech which would not quite come out, he addressed his protest to the smiling Amar Rao.

"Since you are the Emerald King, why not give me some more, as promised, Mir Jaffier?"

"All right, Lord Clive, I will, without any more delay. Laura, bring your uncle, in the family chariot, to my palace to-morrow afternoon. He or you can choose a dozen of the roundest emeralds out of the hundreds in my earthen jar. Then you and I shall mount to the top of my marble tower. From there I will show you how my kingdom lies: not all of it, but the eye can cover a range of a hundred miles. To-morrow afternoon, then, not too early, you shall have your emeralds. How will that suit you, Lord Clive, old boy?"

And he brought his hand down in a resounding slap upon Colonel Moor's flabby shoulders.

It was genially done, but not too respectfully; as even Laura had time to think, though her eyes glowed with admiration. But Colonel Moor was mumbling his gratitude.

"Good Mir Jaffier! Then not in vain did I exert myself, and win Pilashi for your benefit. I often sit and try to puzzle out how I ever did it. That mango tree, under which I considered the odds against me, twenty to one, and thought out the victory! It is well that it is not to do again."

On the next afternoon, not too early, which meant after tea, Laura took her uncle with her to the Lakshmi Vilas, in the wide Residency carriage which was not often used of late, with the fat dappled greys, the footmen with the green and white fly whisks, and the likeness of a family coachman at home upon the box. Colonel Moor was so eager that his hands were trembling:

202 The Song of Surrender

Laura had to grasp them in her firm, cool hands, to keep them from mowing in the air. He wanted badly to take Radha and Ruth with them in the carriage ; but Laura would not allow it, knowing how angry it would make Amar Rao to have Mahar Christians brought within his premises. So the colonel did not have a very happy drive, over the lower city bridge, where the people gaped and pointed at him, and down the other side of the river to the palace.

But there was compensation in the shaded room, of no special pretensions, on the first floor of the more public one of Amar Rao's twin palaces, where was kept, apparently unguarded, the rude earthenware jar containing about one hundred thousand pounds' worth in loose emeralds.

Colonel Moor did not dip for the emeralds : he would not have made as pretty a sight, dipping, as Laura had done, a few weeks before. Instead, they were poured out upon a table for him to choose a dozen of the roundest, worthy to be used as marbles, which were likely as not to be the biggest. Quivering with excitement, he bent over the table, turning, examining, objecting.

"Just keep an eye on the old boy," said Amar Rao to the Reverend William Walden, who was beside the colonel at the table. "Will you not choose some emeralds for yourself, Laura?"

But Laura, though she had repeatedly asked him for more, now blushed a far deeper red than was usual with her, and declined. Since the scene in the mango grove she had become capable of a certain coyness towards the lover to whom she had given everything.

"Do not ask me," she murmured : "they are so pretty ! Let me take a pride in being no poor girl, to be tempted by jewels ; and do not overwhelm me with material gifts, at least until I am your wife !"

And she uplifted such a matron eye to her master that he, not ill pleased, led her away by the hand, after a look of understanding at Walden.

Since Amar Rao was a business man, it is possible that someone kept count of each of those hundreds of emeralds, which were swept to and fro by the hand. But there would have been little need. Laura's fourteen emeralds had been loose about the Residency, and absolutely safe, though each of the hundred occupants of the compound knew all about them. The property at least of Europeans, and of natives of rank, is a million times safer in India, a million times more free from any thought of picking and stealing, than amid the democracy of England. This seems to hold true even in the worst recent times of disaffection. It adds unspeakably to the ease of life if one can leave things about in security.

For this ideal result, great praise is due to the practical administration of the country by the English during now a century and a half. There is less security of property in an anomalous land like Kashmir. Much is also due to the natural timidity of the Indian peoples. But there is an undoubted protective tabu upon the property of the classes mentioned. It is not merely that trouble is extremely likely to follow if the possessions of the ruling officials are touched. The humblest missionaries benefit from another tabu, as being religious teachers. In one way or another, the compound of the least European, and almost Eurasian, is still as secure as the palace of a relentless Prince like Amar Rao.

He and Laura stood upon the wind-swept platform, in the evening sunshine, which did not trouble them, at the top of the white tower which was a landmark for forty miles in every direction.

This was not an Eiffel Tower, nor even a Saint Paul's. Yet, as it stood upon something of an eminence, and as its platform, short of the truncated portion, was two hundred feet above the ground, it answered pretty well.

Down, down, downwards Laura looked, upon the tops of the noble shade trees which Amar Rao had had transported to make a place of greenery between the

204 The Song of Surrender

unlike twin palaces. How little she knew of the life that was conducted in the private palace! But if she did not dream of her lover on the other facets of his many-sided personality, in his other phases and doubtless romances, it was because she dutifully refused to consider him except in his relations to herself.

Arresting herself in such thoughts, she staggered at the width of view as she looked abroad.

What could she take in and realise first?

There, familiar, yet out of all perspective as she looked thus downwards, across the wide bed and narrow stream of the Krishna, a little below, were the grounds of the Residency, the Club nestling in a mere corner of them, then, nearer the river, the stately home where she was still mistress, the servants' lines, the gardens, the great well with the *mot* for raising water, the very creaking of which she fancied she heard.

Her eye followed the silvery thread of the same dwindled stream, at first upward and northward, for half a hundred miles towards its mountain cradle at Mahableshwar; then downward for another half a hundred miles, till it wound south-eastward out of the picture.

Amar Rao, following her enraptured gaze, said:

"The sacred river, Krishnabai, is the true life of the landscape, even in the drought of May. See its various tributaries, winding into it;" and he pointed them out, naming them. "I wonder, love, if you will this year see the river in its Monsoon grandeur, foaming and swirling between brimmed banks!"

"As when the holy mother brought you to me, in the freshet, the day you rescued Radhabai, my hero!"

She gazed at him with eyes which seemed to convey kisses.

A little above them, along the river, were the jumbled and unsightly roofs of the native city, a hive where hummed seventy thousand malcontents. The Maharajah's palace, in its midst, was not a patch on Amar Rao's. Two steel bridges of European make spanned

the river bed ; while in the hither corner were the Ritualist Mission grounds. Beyond the river, Laura could make out most of the bungalows in the cantonments ; the English church ; the splendid hospital controlled by Dr. Sampson ; and at the centre, the bandstand, where the Mutiny Gun had stood, and where the squat statues of their Majesties were being set up in expiation. Save for the shade trees along the admirable roads, all was bare, yellow, consumed by the fervent sun. Yet the undulations of the Maratha landscape, which Laura loved as a native, prevented any monotony. Conspicuous by itself was the grandiose amphitheatre built by Amar Rao.

Above the city, yet of less height than the tower on which they stood, rose the fort of Hari Parbat, tawdry, indefensible, yet grandiose, as one of these hill forts can hardly help being. Half a dozen miles away stood a little mountain with a level top whereon were some bungalows, a refuge from the extreme heat : it was a thousand feet above the surrounding plain, making three thousand feet above the sea.

"That is Panhala," said Amar Rao. "My Rao Sahib is now there, with little Leslie Hozier, who is useful as a companion."

"The little dears !" exclaimed Laura. "It is a goodly domain that you aspire to leave to our Rao Sahib."

"It is more than a domain, it is a kingdom, and no mean one," he corrected.

"So it is, beloved," she assented. "In all this sweep of a hundred miles is there any land to be seen which does not belong to the Raj of Kanhala ?"

"Only for a little, on one segment of the eastern horizon, is there British territory, I regret to say."

He turned his back upon the offending quarter, and inspected the horizons which were wholly within his father's heritage. A pair of field glasses was suspended about his neck ; but they both disdained any aid to their strong young sight.

Thirty miles or more to the westward rose the jagged

206 The Song of Surrender

outlines, infinitely picturesque, of the Ghats, in well nigh their southernmost extension. Thirty or forty miles beyond these was the sea, not to be seen, though a refreshing sea breeze was apt to visit Kanhala at this hour.

"Quibra is that way, is it not?" Laura asked, with fluttering heart. "When you said just now that perhaps I would not see the bursting of the Monsoon in Kanhala——"

"Then you will see it in a grander place, which is Quibra, the abode of love. That is quite out of sight from here, more than a hundred miles south-westward, where the coast lets in. Still further southward along the coast, in the corner of the State, touching Malabar, is the great undeveloped port of Pinzara, where my cousin Sitaram reigns as feudatory: it is his brat whom my brother has adopted for private purposes, and whom he would like to make heir to the State, to the wronging of my Rao Sahib."

"What a shame, Amar! surely you will not allow it?"

"I cannot answer with certainty. There is one within the Raj stronger than myself, before whom my spirit cowers; cowers with loathing, yet cowers!"

"I do not believe it, my hero: you are not the one to cower before any man."

"Not before any man save Ghatgay. His star is in the ascendant; he is a Brahmin; he has steadily increased as I have diminished. But he is in Guzerat just now. There is no telling what may happen while he is away: possibly something to the advantage of the Rao Sahib. You must not be surprised, whatever you hear this week."

"Oh, I hope that the feet of our Rao Sahib will be set upon the necks of his enemies!" cried Laura fervently.

"Wait and see: I do not think that my son was born to be obscured."

Amar Rao did not look like one who cowered, standing proudly on the daymark which he had built,

his head thrown back, fit to be sculptured or painted, gazing hopefully upon the kingdom which he coveted.

"It is a kingdom to be fought for," he continued. "As an educated woman in Europe, you must understand somewhat of what such things mean. Three million inhabitants, largely of the hard-bitten Marathas whom you know. A land the size of Hanover; say one half the area of Scotland, or of Portugal."

"Splendid!"

"For a decade, beginning when I was hardly more than a boy, I held this kingdom in the hollow of my hand. To be Regent was almost as good as to be King! My little Rao Sahib! If I could only secure the succession for you, it would matter the less about myself. Yet would I also love to found a line, so that the Rao Sahib might inherit from me. Dreams! Yet do I dream, Laura, of making you some day Queen of all this fair land, from the Deccan to the sea! Perchance of a much wider realm! If all goes well, if I can successfully ride upon the storms which the future holds, I may even crown you Empress of India!"

Laura's eyes kindled. Surely, even to rave of such things, without absolute unlikelihood, was enough to touch the imagination of a romantic woman.

Yet: "Not so," she said. "To be Queen of love and of your heart at Quibra, is enough for me. Tell me, Amar, when shall I ride Star for the first and the last time into the waves of the Arabian Sea?"

"Not yet; and perhaps the sooner if my immediate plans miscarry. For I have not been lucky of late years. I may need to withdraw myself far, to gather my forces for a different leap. From being Regent of Kanhala I have been reduced to being merely Commander of the State Army, and other things for which Ghatgay does not care. I see little prospect for me within the old framework. Let us sail to my tropical islands of which I have told you, to seek unheard-of fortunes beyond the foam!"

"I am with you, Amar!" she gasped, pressing his

208 The Song of Surrender

arm ecstatically to her side. "O what glorious adventures!"

She stood gazing raptly to the westward, as if, beyond the setting sun, she would pierce to destinies which were not for her.

"Fortunately," pursued Amar Rao, "I pretty well tapped, while Regent, the material resources of the State, which I still monopolise. No one ever thought of doing it before me. I am the one very rich man in the State, and my enemies cannot forgive me for this."

"O you have done nobly! You have lived twenty lives in your few years—I do not even inquire what other loves you have known, my Amar! You have made your unique position for yourself. Yours is the very romance of trade, with a royal touch to it! Lord of Elephants, Emerald King, master of the teak forests which are floated down your own rivers to your own fleets!"

Amar Rao, who liked being praised as well as any of Dickens's Americans, purred with content. It was much that he had done in a brief span: he had hitherto commanded facility and fortune. He looked approvingly at Laura, who, her northern eyes aglow, her hair flaming in the sunset, her bosom heaving with excitement, turned from him to the variegated land spread below them like a map.

"There is nothing," she said, "to my mind so witching as those outlines of the Western Ghats, twisted like corkscrews, humped like camels, scarped like dreadnoughts ploughing the air! They are my native mountains, near to which I was born. Do you not own most of those within sight from here?"

"All. If shape, not size, gives distinction, these are far finer than the Himalayas."

"There was never such a lover as you, my Amar! I like to think of your thousands of servants, beyond or within those mountains, felling forests, digging in the dark for the luminous emeralds! Your timber ships visit the opposite side of the globe; your yachts win

races in chill European waters. You have told me of your airships, preparing and experimenting at Quibra. But most of all do I admire you as Hatipati, owner of most of the darling elephants in South India. They *are* such dears, shambling along, swinging their trunks, shaking the earth ! I shall never forget the pride and dominion beside you at the games in the arena of your building, with the crowds shouting : '*Jai ! jai ! Amar Rao ! Senapati ! Hatipati !*' "

" Yet the crowds, spend as I may upon them, love me not as they do my drivelling brother. Hati, though my tutelary beast, is but a strayed fragment from an earlier world, rickety, uneconomic, and doomed to extinction in India. You love him ; but you would rather not ride upon him ; and you would look absurd, doing so needlessly. I own up to a hundred of him : a single marble-like emerald, such as your uncle is seeking below, is worth a good few elephants."

They were now facing to the south, where, though not in sight, lay the elephant jungles. In other directions they could see forty or fifty miles : over the more level country southwards their eyes carried even for sixty miles. But on this side it was a burnt plain of red earth, without pretence to loveliness, the land of the curse of the Lord !

" Where is the village of Nimbda ? " asked Laura.

" I never heard the name."

" I understand that it is a hundred miles southward from Kanhala, on the edge of the jungle country."

" Then it is far out of sight, in the most undeveloped corner of the State. But why do you inquire about it, Laura ? "

" That is where my early friend, Raghoba the Christian preacher, has been sent."

" Really ! I should think it a very good place for him."

Laura was now scanning the middle distance to the southward.

" What are you looking for ? "

210 The Song of Surrender

She flushed an adorable pink. "The mango grove beside the Krishna where we had lunch that day."

He pointed it out to her, no bigger than a green tree in a Swiss Noah's ark.

Long and ardently she gazed outwards and downwards at it.

"Well, what are you thinking?"

Silently she turned to him, placed a hand upon either shoulder, leaned forward, and kissed him full upon the lips.

"Come," said Amar Rao. "I bet that by this time Colonel Moor has chosen nearer twelve than ten thousand pounds' worth of my emeralds. A nice thing for a British Resident to do in a Native State!"

CHAPTER XVII

A LINK OF EMPIRE

“ Recollecting old England’s sea breezes,
On his back in a lone bungalow,”

lay Lieutenant, locally Captain, George Washington, Fourth Assistant Resident in Kanhala.

To be exact, the breezes which he intermittently remembered, while pondering his problem, were those of the iron coasts of the North of Ireland. There is no better asset for the Empire, no finer fighting and leading material, than is to be found among the younger sons and grandsons of Irish Protestant squireens. Washy’s father (a fact which immensely gratified Mrs. Sampson) was a General of some renown, at that moment commanding the Northern Circle in India.

Chota Sahib, the natives could not be prevented from calling Washy ; meaning, not as oftentimes, of subordinate grade, but very junior and small. He was young to be even a local captain—about Laura’s age, or a little less. About his physical smallness there could be no doubt. His limbs were delicate : his face was so crumpled, crinkled, and wizened, as constantly to suggest, together with his agility, a monkey.

Many things had been against Washy in his childhood. One of the ugliest little men in the British Army ; as he was one of the pluckiest, keenest, most rising. The Residency in Kanhala was not defenceless or betrayed while Washy was in even irregular and enforced charge of it. His mind was clear cut if his features were not.

212 The Song of Surrender

What was the problem upon which he was bringing it to bear? The whole station was already intrigued with the question: what has happened to Colonel Moor? Washy carried it further; and was asking himself: Can there have been foul play? For whose benefit would it have been to use foul play?

It is highly likely, he was inclined to answer his first question. The one person who would have benefited, or could have thought he would benefit from foul play, was Amar Rao.

The hour was a quarter before twelve at noon. Washy lay, and it must be confessed, with his boots on, upon the counterpane of his camp bed, with two pillows under his head. So late in the day as that, he was being shaved, after a strenuous forenoon outdoors. So the attitude, one often assumed for the purpose by officers in India, had nothing Sybaritic. His breakfast was ready to be served in the next room: he had tasted nothing for six hours in the heat. His meagre face was covered with a lather of soap, while the barber, a personal attendant, bent assiduously over the master from behind.

The bungalow, one traditionally occupied by young bachelors, was not greatly better than the Rennies', though it showed evidence of more expense. The bedroom was not at all tidy. The ceiling of stretched and whitewashed cloth shook drearily in the gusty noontide breezes.

Washy recalled—they were never far from his thoughts—Laura and her uncle. The apparition of Laura in Kanhala three or four months before, with her sumptuous beauty, which had smitten him at once, while appealing perhaps to not the best elements in his nature. He had never told his love. It was patent to all; and it was so obviously useless to speak. The aching devotion of his whole heart was still for Laura, tainted in blood though he knew her to be, and infatuated for a native. Yet how conqueringly sweet! She could not help being sweet whenever she spoke to him. But this was now seldom, owing, he knew, to Amar Rao's injunction.

"What can I do for them? How can I help them in this tragic tangle?" he was asking himself.

He recalled Colonel Moor, to whom he had been as an A.D.C., and almost a son, so highly did the older man prize him.

"In almost every way the colonel was my ideal of what a political officer should be," Washy was thinking. "Ambitious, stainless, chivalrous; and, beyond the bargain, personally pure. A sort of Sir Galahad, without priggishness. And now, the undoubted relations with Radhabai, carried on under Laura's nose! Those multiplied emeralds from Amar Rao, blazing shamelessly about the Residency! Amar Rao bears himself as master there, and scowls at my daily visits. O my poor Laura! I must see it to be my duty more clearly, before I interfere. I cannot lightly expose Colonel Moor—not until there is a more coherent story to tell. At least they are not unkind to him. But he is not himself; not a man any more. Plainly a pitiful idiot; and gone so in the night following the Maharaja's Feast! Can the Indian climate play such tricks, as the fool Bishop would claim, alleging himself as an example? I trow not! Yet Colonel Fendall, a good man, tells us not to worry, and that nothing is as bad as it seems. What is a layman to say to that?"

Young Washington had come to Kanhala from a very distant and different part of India. While not so ignorant of the Marathi language as the Maharani Sitara had once told the Maharaja, else he could not have been Assistant in a Maratha State, he was less than closely in touch with the people on this side.

"Yet I can see a stone wall when it is before me," he mused. "If I dare form a mental conclusion, it was Amar Rao's game to disable Colonel Moor from reporting him to the Supreme Government. What, O what, became in one night of that damning letter from Amar Rao to the Teutonic Emperor (bally fool!) which it cost me such craft to steal from Adler's house?"

214 The Song of Surrender

He remembered, with some satisfaction, his duel of intellect with the handsome Teuton agent whom he had esteemed while dislodging him.

"On the 28th of April I gave Colonel Moor the document which could have hanged Amar Rao. The next morning, the 29th, Professor Adler skedaddled: good luck to him and his little family! Colonel Moor might have sent away the fatal document that day, as would have been safer, but he did not. In the evening came the Feast—with this unimaginable horror immediately following. A few days later, when I dared take it upon me to ransack the colonel's desk, the gallows letter had disappeared."

The two ends of the thought, like the ends of the idiot colonel's mind, would not quite meet. Washy could not yet bend the bow of his argument far enough to let the cord slip into place.

"There was some row between Amar Rao and Colonel Moor about Laura, and time enough there was! though I do not know the details. Amar Rao must have longed vastly to disable the colonel, in the interests alike of his love and of his ambition. Now the poor colonel is disabled, that black swine wallows in love which, alas! does not try to conceal its success; while his neck, or at least his position, is saved by the disappearance of the document which certainly lay for two nights in Colonel Moor's desk. I would bring the crime right home to him. But was there a crime? People would laugh at me for using that word. If there were in the wide world a drug which could blast with sudden idiotcy—but there is none; and *if Amar Rao used it*—but he was not even present at the Feast, which was on the Maharaja's premises—my reasoning might have a leg to stand on."

By this time one half of Washy's face had been beautifully shaved, while the other half, the left side remained covered with lather. One half of his face was a reddish tan, the other half a snowflake white.

At this juncture there silently stood in the doorway,

salaaming, Washy's Sikh, as he was known throughout Kanhala. Gulab Singh was a man twice his master's age, a foot higher, and at least half a foot wider across the shoulders. He was a grand man to look at, quite a light brown, with a sweeping beard that was still black, with the merry eyes which, in his race, often veil disaffection, but which did not do so in this case.

Gulab Singh was a pensioned sepoy, who had been orderly to Washy's father thirty years earlier, who had carried General Washington's children in his arms, and who, for love of his young master, had followed him into what seemed a barbarous land.

"Speak, Gulab Singh," said Washy.

"It is urgent," the Sikh answered in Gurmukhi, the tongue of the Punjab. "Else would I not summon my master from his food when weary. This is certain news that I bring. Kanhala City is swarming with demented Marathas, shouting '*Jai Rama Maharaja! Jai Kali!*' For at one o'clock the guns will go twenty-one times from the fort of Hari Parbat, proclaiming Prince Rama heir to the *gadi*, to the exclusion of Amar Rao's son. The besotted Maharaja gives a feast in his palace to thousands of Brahmins thereafter. The Diwan Sahib is away. There is no cool head in control anywhere; therefore I thought it right to speak without delay."

"You have done very well, Gulab Sahib, old friend!" cried Washy, jumping from the bed. He had not ridden into the city that morning, or he would have seen these preparations for himself. None of his Maratha, Mahar, or Goanese servants had taken the trouble to inform him; indeed, he could see from the faces of several, clustered behind the bed, that there had been collusion to keep him in the dark.

"*Jaldi, jaldi!*" he now commanded these. "Have my second charger saddled. And the red waler for the orderly. Three minutes are allowed. Countermand breakfast until I return."

Gulab Singh's eyes brightened with satisfaction.

216 The Song of Surrender

"It is not for me to judge of Government work," he remarked deprecatingly. "Nevertheless, these preparations in the city, although so public, seemed to me to have something about them covert and sly. The people rejoice openly that the Sahibs will know nothing about the proclamation until it is too late to undo it. They make vile jests about the Resident Sahib in his illness. I wondered if the matter were lawful."

"By my action you may see that it is not."

Washington next put several sharp questions, which received business-like answers.

"Let the Hazur wipe the side of his face with this," said Gulab Singh, passing his master a towel. Washy obeyed with docility. The hostile crowds were thus deprived of the sight of a face absolutely motley, although one side still bristled, while the other was smooth.

It must not be thought, from these narratives of love and of sedition in India, that there is no loyalty left. There are still multitudes, anywhere from two or three millions to two or three hundred millions, who are warm friends to the fostering Raj for which they have inherited awe, and which enables them to fill their bellies in peace. Too many Sikhs are disloyal. But Gulab Singh emphatically was not.

He was fetching some bread and butter from the next room.

"Let the master at least eat this standing, lest he faint upon the road in the heat."

"The horses are here," exclaimed Washy.

Yet he caught up a quarter loaf of dry bread as he went out.

Gulab Singh had been fasting for a longer period than his master. Natives have inexplicable powers in this respect, which it is not desirable to imitate. The Sikh, though with his own limitations and caste prejudices, was not more than one half a Hindu: strictly he was no Hindu at all.

He followed his master on horseback, at a respectful

distance, through the cantonments, over one of the steel bridges, and into the city, which bore an aspect almost of insurrection. Tumultuary crowds, from all the countryside around, seethed in the narrow streets. They uttered wild cries, which were redoubled at the sight of Washy and his orderly, of "*Jai Shivaji! Jai Kali! Jai Maharaja Balwant Rao! Jai Rama Maharaja!*"

Washington, looking more than ever like a monkey perched upon his great charger, forged ahead through the crowds, taking no notice of minor insults which, at another time, it would have been the duty of an official to punish. Gulab Singh was now ahead of him, a big man upon another big beast, making a way.

They came of a sudden, full upon a carriage pushing the opposite way. It belonged to Amar Rao. It was one of his less smart equipages, but indubitably his. In it were seated two fat natives, dark, yellowish at that, with high cheek bones, of a type not familiar in Maharashtra. They were receiving, with much complacency, the homage of the crowds, who seemed to enthuse over them, shouting so deliriously that Washy could not catch the words.

"Who were those men?" he asked, drawing up when they had passed.

"I blush to answer, Hazur," said Gulab Singh, really ashamed. "They were the men who wounded the Greatest Lord Sahib [the Viceroy] in Delhi."

"What!!!" shrieked Washy. "Have the assassins been caught? Yet those men were no prisoners. They seemed to be passing in triumph."

"So they were, more shame! They are Bengali dogs, incapable of a spirited act. Liars are they. They did not wound the Lord Sahib. Yet are they glad to say that they did so, in order to win the worship of the people here, who so greatly hate the British Raj that they will bow down before any who claim to have done them harm. I hang my head that such should be my countrymen; and they are not!

218 The Song of Surrender

Yet may Hazur still hear the shouts of the base populace, clamouring the praises of those who merely claim to have thrown the bomb at the Greatest Lord Sahib."

Washy was not armed, nor was his follower. It was far safer and more dignified thus. Yet he was instinctively feeling at the belt of his Norfolk jacket for sword or pistol.

"And they are Amar Rao's guests? It is a source of honour to say that they did that which it should blister the tongue to name?"

"Even so—among the Marathas of this State. The Raja Amar Rao does not show himself openly with these claimant murderers, yet entertains them. They make a lordly living, going about the land engrossing the merit of that great crime, and further inciting the people against our Raj."

"Gulab Singh, did you mark well the faces of those bloated pigs?"

"That I did, little Sahib!"

"There is no telling the chances which the good Lord may put in our way in this sublunary life. The most wonderful things have happened. You may yet see those yellow-black faces of pretended assassins and true traitors in some place where it may be safe to strike out. If so, strike, Gulab Singh; let them not return to their land of mud! Faithful servant of our Raj, I authorise you. To slay those Bengali sedition-mongers will be Government work—*sarkari kam*."

"I will remember," Gulab Singh assented, taking it all in, with twinkling eyes and burning heart.

Washy broke out in his harsh, cackling laugh.

"I laugh to think of you, Amar Rao, when the guilt, which I cannot yet grasp, is brought home to you! Entertainer of assassins! seducer! traitor doubly died! poisoner (yet how can it be?) of white-headed men! Colonel Moor never trusted you. We shall have a long account to settle with you when once I can get the clue to it. And stay; what are these soldiers of yours

doing by the hundred in Kanhala streets to-day, keeping order on an occasion ostensibly directed against yourself?"

The eternal over-subtlety of the East! Washy had already noticed the numerous soldiers of the State Army, who could not have been there without the permission of Amar Rao, their Commander-in-Chief, lining the streets, helping and directing all that went on. The crowds, who shouted many names, never uttered Amar Rao's. The proclamation was nothing if not a demonstration against him and his line, barring the succession of the little Rao Sahib, extending the adoption, to State purposes, of the rival Prince from Pinzara. It was flat defiance of the Supreme Government, which must have a say in the succession to one of the greatest of Indian States. They were supposed to be the guardians of the rights of the Rao Sahib, who would be set aside if the day's business succeeded. Yet here were his father's soldiers assisting in the streets!

Everything at the Maharaja's palace was in confusion. The courtyards were being laid out with endless rows, upon the ground, of brass drinking bowls with a refreshing great banana leaf to each. This was all the apparatus necessary, though it had to be touched by Brahmins only, who could not convey pollution. On the green leaf would be set the appetising mess of curry, with *poli*, *bhaji*, *papod*, dishes that make the mouth water, together with mountains of snowy rice. It was to be such a feast as Brahmins date by, going without food for two days in advance, and two days following. And all to consecrate the exclusion of the poor little Rao Sahib!

"Dismount, and follow me," said Washy.

Through a rather empty palace they clanked, making no effort at quiet. Half way along, Washy encountered, and pushed aside, the fluttering Chamberlain without trousers.

Knowing the palace, he made his way to a small

220 The Song of Surrender

morning-room where the Maharaja was likely to be found.

There, to be sure, he was, seated on a small carved bench with high sides and back. He was partly dressed and partly awake, as though ready to receive news of moment.

Washy was not much more dressed; while he was dusty from top to toe, and half shaven.

"What is this intrusion?" Balwant Rao began, tucking away in the corner behind him a bottle of whisky.

"Maharaja," said Washy, setting his hat the more firmly upon his head, "I have come to ask you questions. What is the meaning of this commotion in your streets? Is it true that you propose to fire a salute of twenty-one guns at one o'clock, and to proclaim your adopted son Rama heir to the State?"

The Maharaja looked pitifully up and sideways at the relentless Fourth Sahib, who was content to leave him the advantage of sitting while he, Washy, stood.

"Why, how dare you talk to me like that?" he spluttered. "I've never been so insulted in my life. Do you know, young man, who I am?"

"Who are you, then?"

"I am"—roundly; then, collapsing—"I am ME."

"You'll be a deposed Maharaja if you're not jolly careful. The character of to-day's proceedings is pretty well marked by the efforts to hide them from the Residency."

"You're not in charge there!" the Maharaja ventured.

"I'm in charge enough for you! Now listen. If you wish to remain upon the throne you will at once sign an order to the commandant of the Hari Parbat Fort to fire no salute this day. There will also be no proclamation. But you can feed your Brahmins if you like."

"Cruel!" moaned Balwant Rao, writhing and weeping. "Is there no escape? Why is not Moropant Ghatgay here to protect me? My little Ramya!"

"Come, look sharp! The minutes are already numbered to one o'clock, when it will be too late to save you. Where is a secretary?"

One of those useful animals was quickly found, who, squatting upon his bare heels, scribbled an order to the commandant in the fort to fire no guns that day in any sort of salute.

"Sign here," said Washy, indicating the place, and offering the reed pen.

"O, you are unkind!" sighed the Maharaja, gazing upwards with reproachful dark eyes. "Who will look after my Ramya?"

But with a little prodding from Washy, the trembling signature was duly appended.

"I will not trust you to send this, Balwant Rao. My own orderly shall take it. Here, Gulab Singh, carry this hot-foot to Hari Parbat; trample upon any who may withstand you; see the order executed. It is now half-past twelve. Off with you!"

Gulab Singh had stood stately by, much enjoying the rapid scene, as his humorous eyes testified. He now salaamed, and clanked away to his red waler. The distance to the fort was nearly a mile, through crowded streets; but it was covered.

Tens of thousands of disloyal hearts and ears listened in vain, throughout that afternoon, for the booming of the guns which were to startle the English, emphasizing the Maharaja's choice of his own heir, and offering to the Supreme Government a needless defiance which would not have been tolerated. It was not much more than a *tamasha* marred; few grasped the significance of what had happened, or might have. There was no proclamation. The Brahmins had their dinner, rather robbed of its point. In the evening there was an expensive display of rockets and other fireworks, which Washy had not remembered to forbid, and which passed for some private celebration. Few Europeans in Kanhala ever knew what he had done.

After staying in the palace long enough to satisfy

222 The Song of Surrender

himself that the guns would not be fired, he rode home quite alone, ill with fatigue, through crowds which still shouted, but more aimlessly and scatteringly: "*Jai Kali! Jai Shivaji! Jai Ramya Maharaja! Jai Balwant Rao!*"

The Residency was not deserted, nor is our dominion in India, while there are still such subalterns to serve as links of empire.

CHAPTER XVIII

FOUL PLAY

It was Ruth who let the cat out of the bag ; giving away everybody's secret.

She sat upon the clean matting in Laura's room, playing with Colonel Moor at the eternal game of marbles with nice round smooth emeralds, of which there were now plenty.

There were signs about of degeneracy, or, to be fair, of Laura's further approximation to native life. European houses in India are apt to be deficient in actual niches in the wall, convenient, where there is no furniture, for dip lamps or Hindu godlings. In the absence of a proper recess in the wall, there had been set, upon a little projecting shelf, a copper image of the jolly Krishna, when a cupid-like boy amid the lascivious milkmaids of Guzerat, escaping, not upon all fours, but upon three of them, exhibiting, in one hand, the pat of butter which he has just stolen. Garlands of heavy-scented Indian flowers, marigolds or champaks, larger than the figure itself, were set around it daily. Laura and both her handmaids had a cultus for the droll image, often laughing over it, and placing before it, half in fun, little saucers of milk and of food.

Squatting beneath such auspices, the colonel had undoubtedly been cheating at the marble game. He was oftentimes aggravating.

"*Aray*, you Veda, I won't play with you any more!" Ruth exclaimed shrilly, springing to her feet in just indignation. "Get along, you old thing! You're no Lord Sahib, as you like to have us call you. You

224 The Song of Surrender

are an idiot, you are, who has been made to swallow datura!"

Thereupon Ruth experienced the greatest surprise of her young life, not excepting the occasion when she recognised her mother in the dripping young woman whom Amar Rao rescued, unconscious, from the sudden flood.

Laura had been standing by. Now Ruth would not have cheeked the colonel had she known that Laura, though so weakly good-natured as sometimes to be in danger, in the Spanish phrase, of being eaten by the flies because she made herself honey, was standing by.

With her little heart in her mouth, Ruth felt herself caught up, laid across Laura's knees, and severely spanked beneath the shimmering silk sari.

"There, you little toad! Nasty, ungrateful, disagreeable little thing! I'll teach you to talk like that to my uncle when you think I'm not near."

Thwack, thwack, thwack the smacks descended, while Colonel Moor began to be interested.

"Don't, Missybai, don't!" yelled Ruth, kicking out in the air like a swimmer. "I'm dying, O I'm dying."

"Don't you touch *my* child, Missybai," exclaimed Radhabai, coming upon the scene with clashings of gold armlets and anklets, more proprietarial than ever, with arms akimbo, yet not daring to interfere except by words. "No matter what she said to *my* Colonel Sahib. If she's a kerani, so are you!"

Laura was reaping the reward, not for the first time, of her over-kindness, her too great familiarity and indulgence to her nearest dependants.

"I know well that I am a Eurasian, and am not ashamed. Say what you will of myself, Radhabai; but I will not have the Resident Sahib injured even by slighting speech."

She let Ruth, with a final smack to clench the lesson, slip away howling to her mother's skirts.

But Laura's face was tragical as she lifted it to the ayah's. Too well she knew that the child had spoken

truth. A single word had carried conviction and illumination to her heart. "Datura" explained everything. The fleshly, trumpet flowers that flaunted at the entrance to their own grounds, and elsewhere in Kanhala; so poisonous that, as her uncle had told her on the day of her arrival, even the little native children know enough to avoid them. They could be fed to one in enmity and make one like *that*—like her uncle, mowing before her at the moment. She tried to fight off the knowledge. But it was too simple a fact, and she was too Indian, not to see that it must be so, once it had been presented in words.

"What is this that your child said about a poison—*poust*?" she said, hoping against hope, to the indignant Radhabai, who had taken Ruth up in her arms, and was comforting her.

"Has not the Missybai ears, if not understanding? Even babes know this in our wicked land. There is a poison which can make a wise man a fool overnight. It grows at your gate. Consider who can have made the Colonel Sahib drink it [*pajelay*]."

"Who did it, Radhabai? Speak!"

"Ask not a Maharin like me such high questions! But it was after the Maharaja's Feast that he came home thus, only stronger; bearing me off in his arms from your door that night. Behold for weeks now mine enemy Rakhma makes mock of me, saying that I serve a datura idiot!"

There was no more to be had from this quarter, in these circumstances.

Shaken with her trouble, feverish, desperate, Laura wanted unspeakably to find certainty without delay. The only approach to a responsible character upon the premises was the butler, Jerome, who had succeeded the immortal but impossible Gaspar. For him she sent, telling him just what had befallen.

"What is the meaning of such awful things? Tell me the truth, Jerome, like the good man I know you are."

226 The Song of Surrender

Jerome was troubled at her trouble, and from fellow-feeling in such a catastrophe.

"All quite right Ayahbai saying. Truth I tell. Such things often happening in India—very bad heathen land, not like our Portugal! Very often poor man having enemies, they giving him datura juice mixed with other poisons; he not dying, but becoming idiot all the rest of his life. I knowing very well what I saying. I having one cousin of my wife's brother-in-law, going like this fifteen years ago, no man knowing what it is, only he a fool who was once a strong man. Missybai not any time seeing Pi-turr, coming every day to the kitchen, bringing my chapatties, taking away other food not wanted here?"

It was honest of Jerome to mention the last fact; he might not have done so before Mrs. Moor or Mrs. Sampson. He used butler's English; while the handmaids had spoken in idiomatic Marathi.

Laura had not noticed Peter. Very near was Jerome to using Gaspar's "Missybai not seeing, hearing, understanding things."

"So this calamity often happening to poor men," he continued. "Only it very strange and sad, coming upon a great officer of Colonel Moor's position."

"Why did you not tell me if you knew all this from the first, Jerome?"

"From respect, Missybai. I poor man: it not my business, telling such wonders, no man inquiring. I not doing my duty in the house, Missybai? I not good to the Resident Sahib, for whom I very sorry?"

"You have done that, Jerome. Then you are convinced all this has been done by someone in hatred to my uncle?"

"Very great hatred and wickedness. But please not asking me who doing it. I poor man; and my business in the kitchen, or behind the table."

Laura had to let the limited, decent man go, with no further help than this.

Then she sat down to her desk, and feverishly wrote

off four almost identical notes. They were addressed to the four men in Kanhala on whom she could lean, or thought she could. These were, in this order, Dr. Sampson, Colonel Fendall, Captain Washington, and Amar Rao.

"A terrible thing has come to light," her notes essentially ran. "Please come here quickly."

These she despatched by the hands of four of the gorgeous red chaprassies, or belted messengers, who stood all day at attention upon the verandas of the Residency, with singularly little to do for a month past.

Dr. Sampson felt that time was bringing its revenge, that he was about to be justified and exalted, when he received his note some ten minutes later, still in the early afternoon. It was not correct for Miss Lowell to have summoned him before he knew if she had dismissed Colonel Fendall. Could the Residency Surgeon, indeed, be dismissed from the august person that he guarded?

As punctilious as if he had been the superior, and Colonel Fendall his subordinate, Dr. Sampson was sending Laura's note to the Residency Surgeon. Then he decided to take it over himself: and found that Fendall had a similar note. To avoid the least appearance of friction, the two medical men turned up at the Residency together.

Washy, much the lighter weight, had already reached the premises. He stood, insignificant, keen, devoted, in Laura's upper room, before the wreck that had been Colonel Moor, listening to the voluble story of the distracted girl, when his seniors arrived.

Laura, who since coming back to India was as quick to tears as Ruth, did not cry this afternoon. Between the sending off of the *chits* and the coming of the first visitor, she had paced the wide room not unlike a caged tigress, her hands clenched, her blue eyes blazing from a dead-white face. She was determined, as never before, save when she elected Amar Rao. She was going to set this thing upon a right basis. If there had been

228 The Song of Surrender

foul play towards her uncle, as there too surely seemed to have been, she would know no rest until she had run down the criminal.

She was merely marking time while chattering to Washington, whom she regarded as a youngster.

When Dr. Sampson's venerable figure, a little short for the great width, with bald crown, but with silvery beard sweeping to the waist, his sun hat in one hand, his dark eyes alert and serviceable, filled up the doorway, Laura rushed to him, and for a moment rested her head upon his shoulder.

"Oh, Dr. Sampson," she cried, "how I have longed to see you for the last hour! You are wise—you are kind—you are experienced. Help me, and tell me if this can be true about my uncle."

Without meaning to be rude, she had quite ignored the gentlemanly figure, close behind him, of Colonel Fendall, the rightful medical attendant in that house.

It was for some such moment that Dr. Sampson had long waited, with indignant heart, bursting with the knowledge which must not be prematurely uttered.

"At last are my lips unsealed," he declared, when Laura had told her story. "At least"—with an elaborate wave of the sun hat towards the effaced Residency Surgeon—"if I have the permission of my senior officer to speak?"

"Go ahead, colleague," said Colonel Fendall, gently. "All we wish is to understand, and to relieve suffering."

But Dr. Sampson was blowing, more than physically, though the stairs had somewhat tried him. He exulted. This was his hour, and he always loved to abound in his own sense.

"You have been correctly informed, my dear, I regret to say," he said to Laura, with his old-world courtliness. "The poor colonel before us is undoubtedly a victim of datura poisoning."

"There is no such drug in the pharmacopœia!" burst in Colonel Fendall, getting excited. "I mean in its pretended property of producing sudden idiotcy."

"There is such a drug in the lives of the people all about you, colonel."

"Hobgoblin superstitions!"

"Don't you be so quick to give names to what you don't understand, colonel. After all, there is much to be said for the idea of Englishmen really colonising India—that is, coming here to make their permanent homes. Only in this way can they get to be in touch with native life. They need not be the less Englishmen for that. Look at me, now," and he slapped his huge chest with much satisfaction. "I never looked upon England until I was past seventy. But I may say that I have lived continuously in India for more than a century, counting from my grandfather."

"And I daresay you know a thundering lot about it, from which I would rather be excused. But I beg your pardon, Dr. Sampson. I am here to learn. You have the floor."

Though one could discuss Colonel Moor before his face almost like a child, he was beginning to grasp that the two doctors were quarrelling, perhaps about himself. He was disconsolate, missing Ruth and Radha. Laura held his hands, to prevent his mowing in the air in a way to get upon anyone's nerves.

"Thanks, colonel," Dr. Sampson was proceeding pompously. "After a century in India I am not keen to claim that the natives have exclusive knowledge of any good thing. But of evil they have much knowledge, which we must follow in order to be able to parry it."

"I see; that is reasonable."

"Of course it is! But the things that you Englishmen reared in England miss merely from not keeping your eyes, or perhaps it is your minds, open! I bet now, if you counted heads in the Residency compound, though you would count more than one hundred, you would not find one that is ignorant what is the matter with the patient. I wonder, colonel, that you can live in Kanhala, that you can be Residency Surgeon, and not be aware that there frequents the grounds a humble

230 The Song of Surrender

understudy of the colonel here, as he might almost seem, although he has been afflicted for many years, and in a less aggravated form."

"Is it so indeed? I live to learn."

"A Goanese named Peter, equally a victim of datura poisoning—formerly a Government apothecary, though never in my hospital."

"I do remember my transgressions!" exclaimed Colonel Fendall, who was behaving well. "Such a man was once brought to me from the American Mission, and I laughed at their story."

"It is no laughing matter," insisted the Durbar Physician. "At this moment the city of Kanhala contains some scores of such cases. Native life is rotten with this particularly mean crime of jealousy or of revenge."

"You don't say, Dr. Sampson!"

"I do emphatically say it. There is not too much about this phase of datura in European books. Yet the fact is well known. I will show you some of the classical places in the books, if you will accompany me home presently."

"I shall be grateful if you will."

"Such cases are much better known to the police in India than in our profession, colonel. Yet missionary doctors know all about them. They are constantly coming up. The dose is often an appalling mixture, containing, besides datura, such ingredients as hemp, tobacco, and nux vomica. As you see, enough to kill an ox; pity 'tis that it doesn't kill! Excuse us, Miss Lowell, my dear, for just a moment."

Stepping aside with Colonel Fendall to a window, Dr. Sampson added details which he did not wish Laura to hear.

"Datura poisoning, primarily causing loss of memory, is very common in India. Among the later effects are inability to swallow, and a change of voice. The vision is deranged, while letters and figures often appear double. The lower extremities are often partially

paralysed. The patient reels like a drunken person. He is sometimes garrulous, and talks incoherently. He may be mirthful, and laughs wildly ; or is sad, as if in great distress. When approached he shrinks back, as if apprehensive of being struck. Frequently he moves about as if to avoid spectra. He picks at real or imaginary objects. There are often ridiculous antics. It is but early days with the patient here. The ancient *poust* was held in much terror. One of the princes rebelling against Aurungzib, when brought into the emperor's presence, pleaded that he might be killed at once rather than made to drink *poust*."

Both the medical men glanced at Colonel Moor as they spoke. Colonel Fendall, with his kind heart, was unspeakably shocked.

"But this is more awful than any imagination. The Italian poisoners of the Renaissance knew no such horror ; they slew only the body."

"Of course. This thing that I am trying to describe to you, is unique."

At this moment Laura came forward with clasped hands.

"Oh, Dr. Sampson," she urged, "I cannot wait any longer. Will you not tell me if there has been foul play upon my uncle?"

"I fear too surely there has been, my dear," said Colonel Fendall, taking the word, and coming forward. "I stand corrected. Dr. Sampson has convinced me that there has probably been datura poisoning, of the practice of which I did not know."

"Oh!" she shrieked, and would have fallen, but that Washy, watchful in the background, caught her and carried her, a good deal more than his own weight, to a chair. Colonel Moor looked on bemused. She had not fainted, however.

"I thought that it was so," she said, "from the moment that I heard the word. Now help me to my revenge! Such things are done by no accident, but from spite. The man who has poisoned unky—oh,

232 The Song of Surrender

may he suffer a like fate! May he know the taste of datura, in mouth and in brain!"

"Hush, my dear child!" protested Colonel Fendall.

"It is much to know of the foul play, since it has been. Now, whose is it?"

"It dates from the midnight of the Feast, does it not?"

So the whole subject was thrashed out anew, but from an advanced standpoint, the fact of a crime, of the datura poisoning, being no longer in dispute.

Washy, silent in the background, felt it was much that the first of the two questions he had perpetually put to himself during recent weeks had an answer, however grievous. The weirdly malignant drug which he had imagined to himself upon hypothesis, existed, and was called datura. That was what was the matter with Colonel Moor. The ends of the argument, of the mental bow, though not yet meeting, approached. Crime there had been. It only remained to find out the criminal.

From the eager discussion of the two doctors and of Laura, as to the probable criminal, there emerged these questions:

Can it have been the Maharaja?

Can it have been the Maharaja's minister, Ghatgay?

Can it have been the dismissed and threatening Gaspar?

From these theories, the Maharaja was unanimously ruled out; the cap did not seem to fit that cracked head at all.

As to the minister, there was the apparent lack of motive, at a time when he was drawing closer to the British connection. He was too able a man to meddle with such doings, though he was an old enemy of Dr. Sampson's.

As for Gaspar, neither Laura, his employer during one momentous week, nor Dr. Sampson, his later employer, nor Colonel Fendall who, like everyone in Kanhala society, knew him, could think seriously of him as the criminal.

"Yet I wish, for more than domestic reasons," said Dr. Sampson, "that Gaspar had not vanished so suddenly and significantly, as if afraid. The Hindus make the most of it. My wife sighs unceasingly for him, as for one not flawless, yet a treasure. I believe that man knows the secret."

"Did Gaspar wait upon Colonel Moor quite throughout the feast, Miss Lowell?" asked Colonel Fendall.

"He was getting a little tiddly towards the end," she answered, smiling at certain recollections. "It was the black Christian, Joseph, who brought the liqueur after an interval."

But what was that to go upon?

Colonel Moor, distressed and distressing, was seated upon a sort of sofa, mooning, feeling neglected although the talk was about himself.

"Oh you poor unky!" cried Laura, impulsively rushing up to him—which made him start pitifully—and pressing his head against her body. "This darling head brought low! I know how it suffers; and it cannot tell us who has ruined it."

Washington, in the background, was thinking:

"None of these know, as I know, and as Colonel Moor knew, the immense motive that Amar Rao had to disable the Resident. If motive can settle it, it is done. The Maharaja's attempt to proclaim Prince Rama on the sly, is neither here nor there, though it would tell against him, if it were widely known. That was probably what Amar Rao sought, to have the Maharaja commit an act, ostensibly against himself, which would lead to his being set aside. By God, I'd give ten years of my life, I'd give my right arm, to be able to run this fox to earth, to rescue Laura from his influence, and to avenge Colonel Moor! If Gaspar were only here to testify what he knows!"

At that moment, not stepping like a cat, but with the manly tread of a soldier, Amar Rao entered the room.

Of those present, only Laura failed to feel it as a sort of racial intrusion, although Dr. Sampson was in a

234 The Song of Surrender

special sense Amar Rao's man. But how he had walked in, as though the place belonged to him! Two of the Englishmen visited the Residency daily, but not in quite that way.

Colonel Fendall, who might still be supposed to be in charge of the case, actually stepped forward, with the words:

"What does this man want here?"

But this roused Laura, who to-day was showing much more spirit than usual.

"I am still the mistress of this house, Colonel Fendall," she said. "This man, as you call him, was sent for by me. What is more, I have promised to marry him."

With the sweetest, becoming gesture she took Amar Rao's hand, and stood thus beside him, looking into his face with all that could be expressed of wifely devotion and self-effacement.

They made a handsome, a stunning couple. But the mere contrast of dazzling white with unmistakable brown (when it was on that side) seemed an outrage to the three Englishmen. Washy, in particular, gnashed his teeth.

Laura's words had settled it. They were like a small bomb going off. While perhaps setting things right morally, those words had damned her racially. Here was she proclaiming an engagement to a notorious multiplied polygamist, whom, to begin with, she could not marry without first abjuring Christianity!

Amar Rao, without saying a word, had turned his back on the shocked Englishmen, and addressed himself to Colonel Moor on the sofa.

"Not feeling so well to-day, Lord Clive, old man? You are lonely."

But he did not slap him on the back. His conduct was quiet, and beyond reproach.

He took from his finger the ring containing the big pink diamond, with its softly pulsating flashes. At a glance of intimate understanding from him, Laura

stepped across the room and fetched a long, narrow ribbon of the same colour. The ribbon was passed through the ring, and dangled before the invalid, who ceased to mop and mow.

It was a scene, possibly pretty and pathetic, from which the Englishmen were excluded. This was so evidently the inner circle. "A stranger intermeddleth not."

"Come, Sampson," said Colonel Fendall loudly, buttonholing him; "we're not wanted here any longer. About this matter, which is very terrible, you were right and I was wrong. You had better take over the case from now. I would soon have had to make it over to you, for I am starting on a long tour of inspection of hospitals in the southern districts: yes, I expect I shall find it infernally hot. As to reporting this new light on the case to the Political Department, let me have time to focus it first. I shall do nothing till I return from inspection duty."

Washy, self-contained, following at their heels to the stair-head, cast a lingering glance at the absorbed lovers. To him, almost knowing what his elders did not suspect, the scene was ghastly.

"The proof of motive is overwhelming," he was thinking. "It was to get that sumptuous, gorgeous dear girl, as well as to recover the gallows letter, that Amar Rao committed the crime."

As soon as the Englishmen had left, Laura briefly told her lover what she had learned, and how. He stood with his sculptured face unmoved, nay, rather expressing sympathy.

She laid a firm hand upon either of his shoulders.

"And now"—gazing into his inscrutable eyes with her unfathoming, blue ones—"do you promise to take no rest until you have discovered unky's poisoner, his murderer?"

"I promise, beloved," he answered with level glance, with soothing intonation.

"Then you may kiss me dear. O what an afternoon this has been!"

236 The Song of Surrender

And the stately, tawny head drooped upon the khaki-covered shoulder.

At about the same hour, the Maharaja was having a bad time with his Private Secretary and Prime Minister in one, Moropant Ghatgay, who insisted upon resigning. After an absence of eleven days, the Minister had just returned, by special train, from the Viceroy's belated hunting camp in Guzerat, bringing with him two tawny lion skins, yet implacable.

"O Ghatgay!" wailed the Maharaja from the big spring-mattress bedstead, upon which he lay undone, a picture of misery. "Do not desert me so unkindly!"

"There is no use trying to help such as you," Moropant replied severely, from the doorway. "During the last fortnight you have had a bottle of whisky daily, besides mixed drinks, and opium both to smoke and to eat, forgetting all your promises to me. I wonder the Bugu doesn't carry you off! It is not for nothing that I oppose your vices. Besides ruining your health, they make you do such foolish things! While I was away, you must needs try to do the one thing which you most faithfully promised me not to do; the fatal thing, which would have cost you the throne; the thing your brother specially wished you to attempt. You ought to bless Captain Washington that he stopped you in the nick of time."

"O it was terrible, Ghatgay. That wizened little foreigner, a *batcha*, with his half-shaven face giving orders to me, the head of the Banswaras, in my own palace! I shall never forget it, never. Why, he told me that if I wasn't jolly careful I'd be a deposed Maharaja."

"That is what you have been on the verge of being for the last thirty years. I admire that young man: he shows excellent spirit and judgment. If Prince Rama had been proclaimed in that illegal fashion, never would he have been allowed to reign."

"You don't say so! I made sure that I was helping

my dear adopted son. But have mercy on my poor head, which is not very strong."

"No, I have washed my hands of you at the long last, Maharaja. Was it twenty-five private secretaries that you had in as many years, up to my coming? Well, find a twenty-seventh; for I will serve and guard you no more!"

"O do not say that, Moropant, my son! Why did you not guard me from myself? Why did you not learn of this palace plot, even from Guzerat, and stop it?"

"I did learn of it," said the Minister, with grim humour; "for I have eyes in the back of my head—there is no use in trying to deceive me! But the moment was inopportune. What would you have had me do, receiving a telegram revealing the plot as it was coming off, at the moment I sat in the Viceroy's howda beside his Excellency, proceeding on Shikar?"

"Was it even thus? O my bad stars!"

"What except crush the flimsy paper and fling it overboard, swearing to his Excellency that all was well in Kanhala State, for the interests of which I was labouring with him in vain?"

"Hard lines, Ghatgay, I admit. But it was not my fault. I was not responsible. They came around me, tempting me, bringing liquor, alleging reasons, working upon my love for the child. The Maharani Sitara——"

"The Maharani Sitara should be horsewhipped," said Ghatgay, bringing his great jaws ominously together. And he doubtless saw, in due time, that she was.

"Remain not wroth," urged the prostrate ruler. "Accept, O Ghatgay, the beauteous diamond like a pigeon's egg which the Teuton Emperor sent me in secrecy, and be still my Minister!"

"I will not, O Maharaja. I go now. Salaam!"

He resolutely departed, reflecting that there was more need than ever for an adequate English reader to his Highness.

CHAPTER XIX

MAHABLESHWAR

WHILE Mrs. Rennie, growing pale, and with temper damaged, held forth upon the rise in the cost of living even in the few years they had been at Kanhala ; while little Cecily sickened and weakened—Rennie did the only work he could do, at his books.

O how he mugged away at Marathi now, and later, after his return from Mahableshwar ! Upon the results of the second examination, which had been promised him for about the middle of June, there depended, according to the neatly printed rules of the Mission, his rise in pay, his stability in life, his tardy chance of being able to save Cecily, or pay his debts. Such motives, though perhaps not sacred, sum up all that most men have to work for.

“For my wife’s honour !” said Rennie, as he mugged.

He had a conviction that it never paid to read by night in the Indian climate, and where the days and nights are so nearly equal. But by rising early he managed to get in ten full hours of work at Marathi before twilight, when he went out, dazed in mind, for a walk which he was often too tired to enjoy. The mere weariness of eye resulting from ten hours of application over the Marathi (Sanskrit) alphabet is something which no European alphabet, unless the Cyrillic, could produce. Rennie, in addition, had often to work with the wail of the child, for whom he felt, in his ears.

The Marathi language is one to be spoken of with respect—a language loved by all who know it well. No barbarous jargon is this, the speech of twenty millions,

who at one time very nearly dominated India. Yet Marathi is oftentimes wooden, cumbrous (the alphabet would make it that), and inflexible to new ideas. It is for the things, and the emotions, within the four walls of a house that it is beautifully expressive.

Rennie had already had to grind up the specially base and rudimentary Marathi script, called Modi, which would seem to be a reaction from the stiffness of the rectangular Sanskrit alphabet, called Balbodh. He had paid a great price for the Reverend Mr. Navalkar's excellent Marathi Grammar, which no student loves; and less than a quarter as much for Mr. Kher's quite equally useful Grammar.

Rennie could dispense with the animals called Pandits, though he did not hesitate to continue drawing a Pandit allowance of a pound a month. What he wanted was to make his mind supple in Marathi by reading as extensively as possible. He reckoned that in these weeks he read and re-read one thousand pages of Marathi; though he could by no chance do more than fifty pages in a day, owing to the number of words still unfamiliar to him, which had to be memorised.

For the most part, Rennie greatly enjoyed his Marathi studies. One book he simply luxuriated in. There is no finer collection of simple Marathi prose than the two volumes, of which only the first is well known, called *Balmitra*, or "Children's Friend." It is a treasury of happy idiom, a little classic. Yet it is characteristic that this model of pellucid Marathi should be a translation, and not even that at first hand. Perhaps this is one reason why it seems so delightful to us, because the ideas are not too foreign. The *Balmitra* was freely rendered into Marathi, quite two generations back, by someone unknown, who must have had a real sense of language, from the English version of the *Ami des Enfants*, which can hardly have had such excellence in the original as it finally attained.

Rennie also read largely in the Marathi Old Testament, which, in the version of the early American

240 The Song of Surrender

missionaries, preserves, in the historical books, no mean measure of the stateliness of the English by the help of which it was made.

“Cecily should have had this trip instead of you!” were Mrs. Rennie’s parting words, unreasoning, yet true, which dinned lamentably in Rennie’s ears as he journeyed up to the hills in the third week of May, in response to the Bishop’s invitation.

Mahableshwar! prettiest and greenest of Indian hill stations! what a Paradise it seems, or used to seem, to the fagged wanderer from the plains! There is nothing big, or grand, about Mahableshwar. Its elevations are scrupulously hills not mountains. Its height above the sea (to be seen glimmering at sunset, thirty miles away) is but four thousand five hundred feet. The very trees are stunted and shrub-like. The deepest sheer drop anywhere is from Sidney, or Lodwick, Point, two thousand feet to the floor of the Koina Valley. The five chief rivers of the Southern Maratha country, including the lordly Krishna, here take their rise. These are the homely, the fascinating and granitic, Western Ghats; not the stupendous, crumbling Himalayas.

From Japan, from Savoy, from Kashmir, from the Mountains of the Moon, travellers return to Mahableshwar, to declare that there is no lovelier place in the world. How fresh and pretty it was (before man spoiled it), with its green foliage and its red soil! But, like every hill station in India, like the entire earth, it has been ruined by mere crowds, by the hideous overflow of humanity.

Motors, and kindred abominations, possess the narrow roads winding through greenery. The densely packed month of May is hardly a delight at Mahableshwar any longer. Many have come sincerely to prefer residence upon the plains, where at least they can have the real India, during the two hottest months of April and May, which are not unhealthy for the healthy.

Rennie, in the Bishop’s large and fluctuating house-

hold, was taught his place as one of the least important among many hundreds of Europeans at Mahableshwar. No one spoke to him save at the meals, of solid excellence. He was free to spend most of his day mugging at his Marathi, in the chupper, or fragrant grass hut, outside the bungalow, which was assigned him. On Sunday he attended, without being asked to take any part, the shapely English Church, for first class worshippers only, which rises on a little hill, beside the monument to a forgotten Commander-in-Chief.

The airy-minded prelate showed Rennie some misleading kindness. On several mornings he had to rise even earlier than usual, and adjourn his work for an hour or two, in order to accompany his Lordship on vigorous tramps over the wooded hills which both of them loved. Rennie was elated, not only by the fact of being asked for these walks, but by the stimulus of conversation with a man who might almost be called intellectual, and still more by the peculiar tone which that man adopted towards him. His prospects began to seem bright to him once more.

The conversations of this Bishop had a flavour all their own, while suggesting a combination, among other elements, of Old Father William and of the Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe*. So delusively busy and self-important he was, so clear cut and conclusive, as to make Rennie think of the Valiant Tailor, going through militant motions behind his window, exclaiming "Slain!"—but the victim was a fly. Yet he controlled the issues of life and death for his shivering ecclesiastical subordinates. "The representative of the imaginary powers," Rennie would say to himself, "acting upon insects, schoolboys at the best, natures so meagre that, as certain fashions suggest a lack of dress material to cut from, so they suggest insufficient material of manhood."

"Yet I am of them, at least by position," he had to return upon himself. "I am a mosquito; while this man is the master of my life. Why not drink the dose, and

242 The Song of Surrender

get bemused, like the others? It would be for my happiness. What will happen if I do not pass that examination?"

Fear for his little family caused a marked change in Rennie's manner. From being offensively independent, he showed that he had in him the makings of a possible toady. He became capable of flattery, not always judicious. He lay awake for several nights, wondering if the Bishop would always remember against him his rudeness at the Sampsons' dinner.

"My lord," said Rennie once, "I cannot express what a refreshment I find these walks and talks with you, after so many months on end at Kanhala."

"Not at all, not at all," answered his lordship, gracefully waving the compliment into the Krishna Valley below them. "Yet I can imagine that you find the tone of Oxford a contrast to that of St. Augustine's. But you have a Cambridge man at Kanhala."

"Little Sweets, with his curdled gossip!"

"I know. As I used to say at Corpus, in the days when I was considered to be epigrammatic: if Cambridge, with her severer training, goes in to produce a featherhead, she does it with her accustomed thoroughness."

Rennie laughed, as was expected.

"The best-read man in Kanhala," he said, "is one not to be met in society."

"Rosario, of course? A mellow and delightful man, all of his own type. I was in his charge, in some respects, when I was at Kanhala as a State guest, several years ago. Night after night I kept him to dinner with me."

"Your lordship is liberal."

"How unmeaning these little distinctions of Anglo-Indian society must seem, at times, to any thinking man! Of course, when one's position places one above all distinctions of class, it is easy to be liberal. But I believe that I am naturally that. I may mention that when I was in the family of the great Viceroy, Lord

Lebanon, he would often say to me, in his silken way: 'I believe you are a born Radical, Wedderburn; you will be corrupting my sons!'"

The Bishop laughed, with a merry, pleasant peal, at this cherished reminiscence. He stood still for a moment, leaning on the Mahableshwar equivalent of an alpenstock. His was a manly, upstanding figure, if developing in the region of a beloved stomach. His smooth face, of a slightly Napoleonic cast, was disfigured by something in regard to which he once asked Rennie, in a confidential undertone, as if between parentheses:

"Do you know any remedy for eczema?"

Rennie had not known. But he was now enraptured by this authentic glimpse of a great historic figure. He already felt himself to be moving among principalities and powers.

"How interesting!" he declared with conviction. "You must have so many recollections of the Marquis of Lebanon that it is positively your duty to give them to the world."

The Bishop smiled, with a pensive sadness.

"So, perhaps, I used to think myself, at one time. 'Put not your trust in Princes.' I, who have met some princes in my day, can confirm the warning. Perhaps the Lebanon family has not treated me with entire justice. I say this in confidence, Rennie. But I may mention that for fifteen years I was allowed to believe that I should have the writing of the official Life of Lord Lebanon."

Rennie (being faint from over-study) was thrilled at the thought of standing so close to one of the great potential masterpieces of twentieth-century biography.

"It is a great subject," he said, judicially. "Although I am not prejudiced in favour of episcopal biographers, I believe that you could have handled it well. Perhaps you may yet do so."

"I do not think it is now likely," said the Bishop, knocking off little clods of red earth with his alpenstock.

244 The Song of Surrender

"Yet, as you so kindly say, I might have handled Lord Lebanon well. I have long been used to patronise rather than be patronised. I have needed but one patron in my life ; but that was the great Viceroy. He was noted for the discrimination with which he made episcopal and literary appointments. No personal motive ever influenced him. Yet literary ambitions will spring up in the most unexpected quarters. I have reason to suspect that one of his younger sons, one of my own pupils, cherishes the design of writing the life of his father."

"What monstrous ingratitude !" said Rennie, by this time with his tongue in his cheek, and consciously leading the Bishop on.

"I would not quite say that. And yet, if you remember that I taught the youngster to write !—Shall we be moving ?"

And the Bishop, who had never published more than a volume or two of sermons, strode forward, pondering the lost opportunity. He was in flannels, with only the leggings to indicate his rank, and that not unmistakably. He forgot to denounce the Indian climate in the air of Mahableshwar, which suited him.

"Your lordship must have met so many interesting people, and that always as an equal," charmed Rennie. "Do tell me about some of them !"

"A few, a few, Rennie. But it is against my rule to reveal personalities. I have not sought the great ones of the earth, but, for the last twenty years, they me. I like better to fling aside my Apostolic dignity, and to converse freely, as at present, as one man of culture with another."

"Thank you," said Rennie. Then, boldly : "How many men are there in the Ritualist Mission of whom you would say as much ?"

"Few, very few. In fact, Rennie, I may make free to say that there is hardly one. Yet we must be careful not to let ourselves be puffed up with intellectual pride. These untrained, and sometimes even unmannered, men

may possess spiritual qualifications of which we may forever fall short. It is a humbling thought which, I fear, too seldom occurs to you."

Rennie was apt to be pulled up suddenly, like this, when he seemed to be getting along the best with the Bishop. His lordship's face had grown severe. From beneath the suave man of the University, and of the world, there was liable to crop up, unaccountable, the acrid believer, who confessed once a month to a bare-footed Father.

Rennie had come to dread these snags in conversation. He used to get over them as swiftly and superficially as possible, without realising all that they signified. The Bishop was the one man of semi-culture whom he had to converse with.

On the present occasion Rennie, though he had as little tact as a man well could have, managed to lead the Bishop back to self-complacency.

"Your lordship may need a biographer yourself, in the future," he ventured. "And stranger things have happened than that I should be the man!"

The Bishop expanded his chest, visibly pleased.

"Who knows? who knows? But I am conscious of not having yet reached that importance. Yet I will not conceal from you that my career was watched with stupefaction by the scholastic world of my day. My early episcopate (I was consecrated at thirty-two) was an object of legitimate pride to my dear mother, although a Presbyterian herself. I am retiring next year—unless I should secure Delhi, as really seems to be my due. Otherwise I shall have served just long enough to draw the highest-grade pension. Who knows what may happen in England? If my merits are recognised by appointment to a Home See (though that has never yet happened to a retired Indian Bishop) I may indeed, as you say, some day require a biographer. Who knows?"

Rennie tried to draw the conclusion that the Bishop would not refuse to stand by one whom he could even

246 The Song of Surrender

contemplate as a biographer. He inquired about the Bishop's seven sons, at home, as if he really cared for them. The two men exchanged several classical quotations, which was a gratification to both of them. The Bishop recalled the days, before his marriage, when he had kept house in Poona with that eminent warrior and bachelor, Sir Edward Bond.

Then he deigned to recall, for Rennie's delectation, a Hungarian Prince whom he had encountered in sea-side lodgings on one of his numerous visits to England. Bishop Wedderburn then learned that Hungarians are apt to know English perfectly, even when they cannot speak German. Indeed, there seems to have been, unknown to England, a special affinity between her and Hungary, throughout the centuries. The lesser nation, of alien blood, lost at the end of Europe, has long been consciously an understudy of England, whom she admires and seeks to imitate.

All this was new to Rennie, and stimulating. It was an example of the real intellectual exchange possible between the two men, of whom the elder had seen and heard so much more.

During the week at Mahableshwar Rennie also encountered the prelate in other variable moods, such as had won him the name of the Wobbling Bishop. More and more, for the sake of his family, Rennie tried to tack to these gusts. He was becoming supple, who was so lately cock-sure. He was not scrupulous in this matter. Indeed his character, under the episcopal shadow, degenerated a good deal more obviously than Laura's had done upon returning to India.

All was not as smooth as possible in the personal intercourse with the Bishop, upon which Rennie still flattered himself. He was not altogether a man of poor spirit.

Napoleon used to say that he frowned, but never scowled. On the last full day of Rennie's visit the Bishop, looking as Napoleonic as he could, yet decidedly scowling, surprised him by a frontal attack.

"I have to speak of an unpleasant matter," he said decisively. "It concerns your behaviour at celebration. There have been complaints about it. No, it does not matter from whom. Your attitude was said to be lacking in reverence. It was even said that you stared at your fellow communicants. There was someone at church yesterday morning who was very much offended at your conduct, and complained to me of it in vehement terms."

"Good God!" exclaimed Rennie recklessly. "This is a put-up job. I, who have been administering the communion for the last seven years!"

Then it flashed over him, what alone the humiliating little trouble could be. On that morning, he remembered, among the limited number of communicants in the outwardly pleasant church on the hill, there had been a bright red silk blouse, perhaps noticeably good-looking for Mahableshwar, though not for England—not a patch on his own wife!—kneeling beside him. He could not deny to himself that he was glad to have another view of her when he glanced up, though he had also wished to control the movements of the chaplain, who was approaching with the wafers. That was everything: the head and front of his offending. The paltriness of it all! The way in which this prelate before him had rapped Captain Washington over the knuckles for extending his hand where it was not expected, with other similar details, flashed through his indignant memory.

"Did she know that I was a clergyman?" he roundly asked.

"She could hardly be expected to know," answered the Bishop, glancing up and down Rennie's aggressively lay attire.

Do not the devotees excel in paltriness, pettiness? And the waspish venom of some of them! Rennie was filled with vivid loathing: the Bishop could only see that he was in a bad temper. A pest on Bishop, and communicants, and——! Anyhow, what was he doing in that gallery? what was Georges Dandin doing there?

248 The Song of Surrender

He had put his foot into it pretty thoroughly in one short week. All his attempted toadying to the Bishop, at the cost of some self-respect, had gone for nothing. Better would it have been to stay by his family, and never to have accepted the episcopal invitation which had flattered him.

That afternoon the Bishop took him for a short farewell walk which was not a success. He made the Bishop look serious by quoting, upon their common literary ground as he even yet hoped, several of the most deadly ironies from Heine, and from the prose of Matthew Arnold.

Such is human nature, that Rennie was still proud to be seen walking with his bitter-sweet Bishop. "The Lord Padre Sahib" the natives called him; sometimes "the Great Padre Sahib;" and sometimes merely "the Lord Sahib." Even in these days of the crumbling of ecclesiastical claims, this far-away Bishop had preserved that eminence. The Governor might or might not be a lord; at present he was not. But the Bishop was always that by courtesy.

"Your Second Marathi Examination will be held towards the middle of June, at the convenience of the examining committee, in my Poona house," announced the Bishop. "Doubtless your fellow missionaries will not like it; but that may pass. I give you express permission."

So far so good. But there was more to follow.

"You are too secular-minded, as I have repeatedly told you," the Bishop continued, gazing at Rennie with granite eyes. "The very doggedness with which you have buckled down to pass this examination does not bespeak consecrated motives. It seems as if nothing will give you the priestly point of view, although you are—I regret to say it—in priest's orders. I know not what will be the end of you in my diocese. You antagonise and despise your fellow missionaries, presuming too much upon your University degree. It may yet be a case of 'Down, Cambridge!'"

"After this, you will not be surprised at what I shall tell you. You have ceased to be honorary chaplain at Kanhala: I have withdrawn my sanction. There are several reasons for my action. Apart from the complaint of the communicant yesterday, there is your slack indifference in regard to the character of your sexton. There are also reports concerning Mrs. Rennie and the—ahem, I will say no more! Anyhow, you have been too fond of the chaplaincy, and the company which it helped you to keep: it may have withdrawn you from purely spiritual work, if you know what that means. The other missionaries are resentful; not jealous, as you have supposed. It is high time that Hugh Law had his innings, even socially!"—smiling.

Rennie bowed his head, and took it all in silence. The week of more intimate intercourse with the Bishop had given him the sensation of being irregularly taken up, and dropped again with a bang. It would have been safer, more dignified as well as pleasanter, to maintain his early attitude of mere scorn for the paltry local prelate, out of which he had been frightened by the narrowness of domestic accounts.

Was there no mercy? Rennie had not the heart to speak. While the Right Reverend Father in God glowered at him, his thoughts were with a letter which had reached him in his chupper, unknown to the Bishop, from Mrs. Rennie, announcing the death of little Cecily two days before, and her burial the same evening.

"O this shocking suddenness of things in India!" wrote Mrs. Rennie. "I could not have survived but for the unspeakable kindness of the Sampsons. Dr. Sampson says that our baby need not have died if she could have had this season in the balmy air of Mahableshwar, where you are."

So the visit, one of the most distinguished of his life, had already turned to ashes in his mouth.

Rennie lay awake all that night, in his fragrant hut of hay, in the balmy air which he did not need, listening

250 The Song of Surrender

to the tunes of the wind in the stunted trees, which are quite different from those in the pines, much further north.

He had hitherto gone with a certain bounce through life, though doing nothing remarkable. He now felt himself to be a homunculus, a very little man compared to many. He felt the sting of the saying, brought home, that one man may steal a stableful of steeds, while another may not look over the wall. He tried to be fair. But his heart ached for his one child lost, as dear to him as to their father any of the seven young Wedderburns, who were being brought up in, or for, public schools.

"A-scheming how to count ten bob a pound," like any suburban clerk, he lay awake on his last night in the hills, as his wife lay awake in Kanhala.

"Bishop Wedderburn was better launched than myself," Rennie reflected; "and, I grant it, better gifted. O what must it feel like to be Editor of *The Times*, to be Bishop of Colombo, when scarcely thirty! and Wedderburn was almost of that precocious group. To have the power, and the dignity, at that age! less than mine, who am tossed about for a livelihood! There is no use thinking of such things: I never was in that sphere. But I too have my rights. Wedderburn proclaims from the housetops that he is sitting tight for his pension, having outlived all usefulness—though he sits fidgeting! I betray a secular mind because I wish to pay my bills, to save my wife and child! Was any good thing ever done, I wonder, except from secular motives? Lottie is running down in health and temper. Well, I have the Bishop's express promise about the examination."

He left Mahableshwar the next morning; reaching Kanhala, a day and half later, to find an execution in his house. In order to get rid of the native bailiffs he had to seek the usurer who was now his single creditor, and borrow a thousand rupees, of which only a small portion reached his hands.

Moropant Ghatgay had, by this time, accepted the diamond as big as a pigeon's egg, had withdrawn his resignation, and again undertaken the guidance of the Maharaja's destiny.

While Rennie was away, there had been a one-horse ceremony for the unveiling of the dumpy statues of the King-Emperor and his consort. There was a gathering, scanty for such an occasion, of some hundreds of natives, who looked promiscuous, and who did not behave respectfully. It was only Washington, for the Residency, and Moropant, for the Durbar, who made things go at all. The Maharaja looked quenched, ashamed of himself. He was inclined to gush and to weep; but did not attempt a speech. Colonel Moor, the object of mocking words and glances from the throng, presented a far sadder spectacle. He had been brought out, for the last time in public, in the ample family carriage with dappled greys, which he did not leave. Laura sat beside him on the back seat, holding his hands, and making him keep fairly quiet. It was a relief when the inauguration was over.

The omens were bad. The statues had to be guarded from the first by the soldiers of Amar Rao, who did not attend the ceremony.

The next day Washy, the only good brain or heart in the Residency, was summoned away to the roadless southern jungles, a hundred miles distant, by news of a man-eating tiger which was devastating the village of Nimbda. Indian villagers may be as seditious as they please; but when they are in serious trouble it is for an Englishman that they send.

CHAPTER XX

A LABOUR M.P.

"THEY say that this our master, Hozier Sahib, is no more than a coolie in his own country."

The speaker was the big, imposing Tulsiram Bootlair, who had accompanied the Member for Houndsditch over half of India as general servant and interpreter.

"Verily, they are fools in Vilayat," said Hozier's second servant Kadir, a Mohammedan. "They ask the coolie people to choose one from among themselves to be a Member of Council, and help rule the land. Coolies and Yahudis have chosen our master."

"He is in a Prince's house now. But the real Sahibs of Kanhala will not know him openly. The Colonel Sahib at the Residency, although a datura idiot, refused to receive him when he called."

"He is no better than a soldier Sahib, a sweeper," scornfully added Kadir, who by caste was precisely a sweeper, in the special Indian sense of the word. At present he was bearer, or child's servant, to little Leslie, as it would have been highly inconvenient for Hozier to travel about with an ayah.

The worthies squatted upon their bare heels within the entrance to his comfortable apartments in the more public of Amar Rao's two palaces. They lived upon the fat of the land. Their duties were merely nominal, since the palace servants did most things.

During many months Hozier had been paying them on a rather lavish scale, besides taking them about with him.

"No credit can come to us from serving such a master," said Tulsiram.

"Of course not. The English people will all be coolies soon. They say that this one has actually worked in his day as a carpenter [*sutar*]."

It was quite true. Charles Hozier had handled a plane in his boyhood. It was the deepest determination of his life never to do so again. His father was an aged carpenter and joiner, now supported by the son in a flower-covered cottage on two pounds a week.

"What a shame! Yet will the coolie people always find *pakka* Sahibs to send out to India, or the whole arrangement will fall through. But as I was saying, if our faces are blackened by a working-man master, we may as well get the highest possible pay in compensation."

"We will cease work otherwise."

"After all, as a Member of Council he can afford to pay whatsoever we choose to ask. In his own land he has often arranged an *i-shtreik*, inciting working-men to cease from serving their masters, save upon their own terms."

"Yours are words of wisdom, O Bootlair Dada. Let us see how our master likes an *i-shtreik* against himself. Five rupees a month more for you, and five rupees for me."

"Nay, low-caste fool! Five rupees for me and three for you! You will spoil everything by such unreasonable demands. Your birth is no more mine than is our master's birth that of the Resident Sahib."

The wiseacres proceeded to jangle, seated there upon the floor of Hozier's ante-room. But they presented a fairly united front when their master entered, breezy, from the Club.

"Hullo, Bootlair. I'm late. Hot water *lao*, one of you, for the bath."

The servants stood dignified before him with hands at their sides.

"Sir," said Tulsiram, with manly firmness, "we will not do any more work for you till you raise our wages."

254 The Song of Surrender

"This is an *i-shltreik*," Kadirā stumbled after. "A rise of five rupees apiece."

"Peace, cow-killer! We settled upon three rupees for you——"

It was a moment before Hozier took in the situation. Then he laughed long and heartily.

Though he did not take his stand upon it, though he was not exactly proud of the fact, it was true that he had incited and organised certain English strikes in the past. But he was a growing man. He was ceasing to boast of such doings, just as he no longer announced his years by saying that he was of the same age as the firebrand Naval Secretary.

"You thought you had me," he said, turning upon the faithless menials. "But you're *had*. I'm returning to England in a very few days. Didn't know that, did you? Nearly a month's wages I owe both of you: you can look for them in the deep sea! Get out of this room. *Jao!* I don't have the scum of the earth stand up to me! I'll look after Leslie Baba myself. I'll even polish my own boots if it's necessary—but it won't be. Balaji here in the palace is worth the two of you together, and to spare. Here, are you going to *git*? Sepoys! Balaji! I'll have my rooms cleared when I give the order. *Jao!* When I say that I mean *jao!*"

It was over in a twinkling. There was no resistance in Tulsiram and Kadirā. Taken by surprise, repentant, despairing, they only longed to be assured of their lives. With the palace servants looking on, ready to help as needed, Mr. Hozier assisted each of them off his premises with a satisfying kick *a posteriori*.

That was the end of the domestic strike against the strike-maker.

Hozier smiled as he happened to remember being told that a man may travel from end to end of India with only two words of any native language. *Lao* means to bring, to serve. *Jao*—it is astonishing how frequently and how fervently that little word has to be used in India!

Amar Rao was unquestionably doing Hozier well. Often and often did the youthful senator bless the inspiration which had made him write to Amar Rao, after the Kanhala Government had refused him.

If there were a fly in the ointment, it was the way in which the prince's household engrossed and monopolised little Leslie, as a prized companion for the Rao Sahib.

They had all been stopping for a few days, Hozier included, on Panhala, the level mountain top, a thousand feet above the plain, and six miles from Kanhala, which sometimes afforded a refuge in the extreme heat.

There was a sudden commotion of departure. Hozier learned, in the early evening, that the Rao Sahib, with some of the womenfolks, Leslie accompanying as a mere dependant, was to be taken in a carriage down the hill, and then twenty-five miles across the plains to another summer dwelling of Amar Rao's, amid the hills.

He was a good deal disturbed. He feared that so young a child, with no one in particular to look after him, might be jolted out of the carriage, through no one's fault; anything might happen. Yet Hozier dared not interfere, specially where native women of rank were concerned.

The father ordered the palace servants to saddle the powerful horse which was at his disposal during the visit. Without saying a word to anyone, he rode in the darkness close behind the carriage which bore his child, down the precipitous descent, and across the wide plain to the foothills of the Ghats. With his own eyes he saw that Leslie was safe, that nothing had happened. Then he rode back again, weary, this time to the Lakshmi Vilas, arriving long past midnight.

It was manfully done, so that none could help honouring him for it. If not a protest, it was the strong compulsion of a father's heart, a potential protest.

About this time there were rumours that Amar Rao's family would like to keep Leslie permanently, or at least for some years.

256 The Song of Surrender

"Ah, no, they don't!" laughed Hozier, for all who would hear. "They're not going to take my boy away from me. Hah! hah! hah! All the Rajas in India are not rich enough to do that!"

Beatrix Sampson and Hozier had met once more to say a final farewell.

They might have met in her mother's house, as they had lately been doing. Meetings by the roadside with country girls had once been familiar to Hozier. But they hardly came into the drawing of Beaty's life. Yet since Washington was away, and since he seemed inaccessible anyhow, it did not so much matter.

So the potential lovers met once more, to say good-bye, in the dust, beside the olive-coloured prickly pear hedges.

They had thoroughly enjoyed these meetings, finding each other good fun. They would have been mutually suited, under different circumstances. But they were not for each other; their destinies lay continents apart. If Beaty married a gentleman, as she must do, M.P.'s as such would be nothing to boast of in her future. Hozier, too, with his advantages, had plans for a solid second marriage.

So, with a sentimental tear in his eye, but none in her sea-green orbs, they kissed many times, and parted smiling.

"You will not find so good-looking a fellow as myself," he chaffed. "You will think of me hereafter in the evenings."

"No fear!" laughed Beatrix, hard as nails, as she ran away.

But she would.

The pleasantest things must have an ending, including visits.

Long visits do not come at all into the scheme of native life. Parts of three days make the outside limit for most natives, visiting others not relatives. "Arrival

day, guest day, departure day," is the way they are counted.

Invited for a week, Hozier had been at Amar Rao's for seven weeks. Though he was paired in Parliament, it was time, for every reason, that he should be moving. Amar Rao had given him a hint that his services might be required as soon as ever he could get back to the House of Commons. It was a marvellous prolongation of a cold season tour to be still lingering inland by the end of May.

Hozier would keep an enchanted memory of his friends in Kanhala—not excluding the attractive and voluptuous native women. For Amar Rao's hospitality had been of the most inclusive sort, such as, since the fall of the American Slave States, can be found only in India.

Early on the morning of the day that he was to depart, the Member for Houndsditch stood with his host in the plain room where was kept the earthen jar of emeralds, replenished since Colonel Moor had depleted it of a dozen of the finest specimens.

Amar Rao's manner was indulgent, favouring, amused. Apart from policy, he had personally taken to this guest from the first, across all gulfs of class and of race.

Hozier's manner was naturally good, though he had to guard against its being too florid. His speech was not that of a reading man, but of an observant man, proceeding from a Board school, who has polished himself in tolerable society. His limitations were shown by the fact that he still intended, upon returning to England, to send Leslie to a school of the State, believing the prejudices against such to be mere affectation; yet he might never carry out this purpose.

For the rest, Hozier had frequented the great, in a sort of way. Since coming to India, he had even known the perfunctory hospitality of Government Houses. In the House of Commons, where he was not offensive, he had received a kind word from Carson,

258 The Song of Surrender

a smile from Balfour, and had once rubbed elbows with Bonar Law.

"That is all," said Amar Rao, who had been giving instructions. "I think that there is an understanding between us. I do not seek a servant in the Irish Parliament. But I shall be glad to have a representative whom I can trust in the English Commons. And now perhaps, before you leave, Hozier, you would like to dip for vanities in this dingy jar."

Hozier looked handsome, dignified, almost self-possessed, as he stood squarely, facing away from the table, and tried to dip nonchalantly, as if the result did not very much matter.

His right hand, which was both large and hairy, descended upon the jar, covered its mouth for a moment, then went below. There was a slight struggle to withdraw it again as full as possible.

"Let me see what you have taken," said Amar Rao.

The legislator reluctantly opened his paw, displaying spoils, both large and small, a good deal more numerous than those which Laura had won.

"That trash," observed Amar Rao, "will fetch you ten thousand pounds in any city of the world, however foolishly sold; decidedly more, if disposed of by an expert. There is plenty more where this came from. You are not likely to stand in this room again. But the Kanhala Emeralds Syndicate, in Lombard Street, will honour your demands upon it, within reason, so long as you continue to show *what for* in the House of Commons, or outside."

"O moon and stars!" ran Hozier's electric thoughts. "Here in my hand is capital that will give me another income as large as my pay in the House of Commons. Good old Houndsditch! I have often thought of changing my constituency because of the name. Yet I would not be standing in this proud position but for Houndsditch. There is nothing you may not rise to, Charlie, old boy—even to marrying both well and for love! But blast the horny-handed sons of labour: I'll

take to manicuring! Perhaps I can wash, and sit in the next Parliament as a rabid but respectable Radical!"

Aloud he was spluttering—though he did not often lose countenance, and though he knew that Amar Rao had no right to the title:

"O your Highness, I am your most grateful servant forever. Test me and see. In Parliament, or on the platform, I will say whatever you wish!"

"Not too much, or without occasion, or in the wrong way. But in addition to my explanations, you have seen the place and the people concerned. If there should be startling news from Kanhala a month hence, or at any time—a little word in season!"

"Single-speech Hamilton was not paid as I am, your Highness. The devotion of my heart is yours. I live in the hope of another visit like this. I will be faithful, I will be discreet. The things that you have done for me! The natural products of your wonderful State, whether jewels or the types of dainty womanhood——"

"That will do for thanks," said Amar Rao with a subtle smile, steering the embarrassed legislator, with his fistful, towards the door. "A carriage is waiting for you below. My Balaji will accompany you and your son to Bombay, seeing you comfortably aboard. By the way, I hear that your Kadirra has brought an action against you for assault: I shall make it right with a word to the magistrate."

He stood for a moment with his hand resting friendly upon Hozier's shoulder.

When Amar Rao returned to his private quarters, he went through elaborate ablutions before he could eat, to free himself from the taint of having touched Hozier; not because he disliked the man, but for ceremonial reasons, and because orthodox Hindus were watching him. But it was to be noted that personally this Hindu Prince was far less touchily suspicious with the low-born senator than he had been with Colonel Moor.

CHAPTER XXI

TIGER ! TIGER !

THE last weeks preceding the Monsoon passed in heat ; not intolerable upon the level of the Deccan, but a torment in the lowlands.

The clouds would float up over the sky, lingering long, and troublesome because they shut off all wind. Then, Indian-fashion they would too often float away again, barren, or carrying their treasures elsewhere. But they would sometimes descend in the refreshing so-called mango showers.

The primeval village of Nimbda was one of those where very mind partakes of the quality of the soil—"Back to hours when mind was mud !"

In this case, however, it was baked mud. Situated on the edge of the luxuriant jungle country, Nimbda was yet on the burnt plain.

It was much hotter here than at Kanhala : not only as being a degree or two further south (and each degree counts) but because nearer to the level of the sea.

It was a large village ; and the fields were not unfertile, when they could secure rain. The people were chiefly Canarese, darker than the Marathas, sluggish and cloddish. They have always been an inexpressive race, without any history worth speaking of. But they did not here attain to the blackness or the prosperity of the Tamils, on the red soil much further south, and inland.

In many parts of India are large landowners, with whom a European can temporarily chum up, and who will entertain one in a rough and ready sort of way,

with much good will. Here there was only the three-acres-and-a-cow man. It is a desolate enough ideal. If humanity may ever be said to be uninteresting it is where this ideal has been attained, in whatever continent.

That was why Washy was in tents, outside Nimbda village, even in such heat—because there was no one who could put him up in less discomfort. He had come, upon an urgent summons, to slay the local tiger. It was an old tiger, who had deserted the adjoining jungle, where life was too strenuous. He found the village children easier to catch, if not more tender, than young gazelle. He had taken up his beat beside the thin stream where half the population had to go for water.

This corner was rightly called the most neglected district of Kanhala State. Life was primitive, while fairly prosperous. The very cart track, which joined on to the main road far away, ceased at a distance of forty miles from Nimbda: there was no approaching the village in a straight line from Kanhala. The restless wheel, too apt an emblem of modern life, was not known in any shape at Nimbda, or for far around.

All movement, not on foot, was here done on horse-back, as in the European middle ages, and in most of Kashmir to-day. Washy had brought his small tents and other kit, on the backs of mules and of pack bullocks. He had not expected to be at Nimbda long. But the old man-eater was fly. He shunned the neighbourhood of the crazy machan which the villagers had erected by the bed of the stream, beside the carcase of their very oldest buffalo, sacrificed for the public good.

Raghoba the Christian preacher also found this countryside flat, the people alien. He could not buy the kinds of grain upon which he and his poor old wife were wont to subsist. The air and the water did not agree with him. He was having a miserable time of it as a dependant of the Ritualist Mission.

In his home beside the Krishna, near Tulsipur, two

262 The Song of Surrender

hundred and fifty miles north from here, Raghoba had been a vital influence for good for many villages around. If he made hardly a convert, he had increased the respect in which Christianity was held. But he would do no good at Nimbda in half a century. The people were hostile to him. He lacked the language in which to communicate with most of them; and he had been forbidden to practise his humble healing arts, which at least made friends. Above all, he knew that he looked a guy in his severe and stifling cassock.

Raghoba had made haste to pay his suave and sincere respects to the Chota Resident Sahib. Washington, though disliking most Native Christians, had recognised in him a kindred manly soul; had given him a few rupees, and words of encouragement which were even more valued.

Raghoba, too, had been a hunter before the Lord in his day; with a cast Sepoy rifle which was easy to purchase at five rupees, and with a gun license which was not so easily renewed from year to year. Those happy days were over. But he attached himself to Washy's camp, discarding the cumbering cassock for the nonce, and determined to be in at the death of Wagh.

In the camp was a valiant man, taller than Raghoba, with twinkling, kindly eyes, with whom he felt an instant brotherhood. Gulab Singh was not as the blind Hindus, who bowed down to wood and stone. Raghoba discovered the Sikh to be as much a man of one book, the Granth, as any Moslem or Christian. It would not have done for them to discuss theology, or they might have quarrelled. But their tastes were healthier than that. They were also without any familiar common tongue, conversing by choice in bad Hindustani.

Yet they held good intercourse for some days, laying their plans against the tiger from the jungle, and other tigers. Two strong men had met, if not from the ends of the earth, at least from the ends of India.

Raghoba, in his free *dhotar*, which felt so cool and comfy again, and the northern Gulab Singh, in the

trousers without which he would have been lost, stood in the evening at the back of a gathering of a hundred and fifty men in the little square before the house of the headman of Nimbda, a Maratha.

From the raised earthen platform two fat men with evil, unforgettable faces, were addressing the people. No such faces were ever seen from the Deccan downwards. For although one may there meet most shades of brown running even to black, a positive yellow glow through the dinginess is unknown. So are those high cheek bones, the furthest westward extension of Mongolian features. Also, it must be admitted, the strangers spoke in good Hindustani, with a degree of humour which the Bengalis alone are said to possess among the peoples of India.

They held their audience of Marathas and Canarese, unresponsive though it was. Their manner was one of jocose conversation with the crowd, stirring them up.

"Behold, I was the man who threw the bomb at the Viceroy when he passed by on the elephant, his wife behind him. And this my friend supported me, standing beside me on the housetop."

There were murmurs of *Shabas!* from the men, most of whom squatted upon their heels. They were, however, hard to impress ; a refractory soil.

"Under my blanket, a fig for the king!" said one bumpkin, bolder than his neighbours.

"Shabash, brother!" the speaker took him up. "A king is all right, if he be of our own land. But who wants a white King-Emperor from beyond the Black Water? When Bharata is independent she may need a supreme ruler, Hindu of the Hindus. The Maharaja of Nepal, who forbids cow-killing, who has never bowed his head to the English and will not have them within his dominions, may be our destined monarch.

A few caught on, uncertainly ; but this was talking a continent apart from them. There was quicker response when the speaker condescended to local politics, talking of the meritorious Maharaja Balwant Rao, and of his

264 The Song of Surrender

patriotic brother, Raja Amar Rao, at whose expense they rode through the villages, and who might yet become Emperor of India.

"Nay, but we would rather have the Maharaja Balwant Rao, patient and pious, who protects us by his merits," was the persistent opinion of the people.

Then followed, carefully done up in little doses for rustic consumption, the lies which are debited in a million Indian villages. They are often read aloud, from the propagandist rag, by the one literate person, the village clerk. Things incredible, yet believed. How we fear the growing population of India, seeking to reduce it by poisoning the wells with plague germs, by digging canals to spread malaria, by infection conveyed by vultures from the Parsi Towers of Silence. More lately, we are believed to have started a campaign against cows and all milch animals, with the purpose of killing off the population in infancy.

Thus did the importers of automatic pistols and literature try to rouse that mud world. "Without bloodshed of an Englishman there is no acceptable sacrifice to the Great Mother, Kali!" was their persistent refrain.

It did not matter that this village community would not be roused worth a cent. They did not look upon a white man once in ten years. The one now near them had come there to help them, they felt through all their dumb hostility. Other communities were more inflammable.

Long before the Bengali agitators had made an end, Raghoba and Gulab Singh had turned away in utter loathing.

"Do such swine deserve to live, Raghoba Dada?"

"I trow not!" replied the Christian.

"Is it enough?"

"It is," answered Raghoba with conviction. "Last night did I pray to my God to show me if this thing were wrong; yet am I of the same mind still."

The two men were wounded in the loyalty to British

rule which they had in common ; though they had not a common religion. They were indignant beyond all power of surface expression. Yet a Sikh is not necessarily loyal ; while a Native Christian cannot help being so.

"I have spoken again to my Chota Resident, Captain Washington Sahib," said Gulab Singh with importance, as they walked apart. "These are the Bengali dogs whom we saw lately in Kanhala, wallowing in Amar Rao's carriage, receiving the plaudits of the city crowd because they falsely claimed to have hurt the Greatest Lord Sahib. 'Mark their pigs' faces well,' said my young master ; 'and, if you ever get the chance, slay them without pity.' 'Is it still an order?' I asked him yesterday. My Chota Sahib laughed, in the way he has. 'Is a lie less a lie,' he said, 'or an order more an order, for being repeated three times? Behold, this is warfare. It is Government work—*sarkari kam!*'"

"*Sarkari kam*" repeated Raghoba, proud at being associated with anything Governmental, yet a trifle troubled. "Verily, it is execution, not murder. There has been no haste about it. Yet will not this be an exploit to boast of to our wives or to our Padres."

"Bah ! who speaks sincerely to women? But listen. I have inquired, and know. These messengers of treason are lodged in the headman's house, he unwilling, by Amar Rao's general order. They leave early to-morrow morning. No one here cares enough for them to accompany them upon the path. Two miles on the way to the next village is a lonely nulla, which I know. You and I, brother, shall await them there, hidden, with our rifles."

Raghoba, who preserved many unregenerate instincts (or he would not have been such a fine fellow), was fascinated by the thought of such *shikar*. It was the finest that had ever fallen to his limited lot ; though he had once slain a vegetarian brown bear, up the Koina Valley.

In the dawn of the next day the Bengali emissaries,

266 The Song of Surrender

unattended, rode into the nulla upon the fine ambling palfreys which Amar Rao had presented to them. They did not ride out again. The ponies, unrecognised, were picked up by strangers, long leagues away.

Wagh, the vicious old man-eater, ten feet long and weighing four hundredweight, found the juicy corpses before the vultures and the jackals had done much damage. That was why he could afford to neglect the oldest buffalo of Nimbda, corrupting in the opposite quarter.

The burnt plain, not really vast, yet interminable to the eyesight, stretched roadless and yellow in every direction. Not a tree broke the monotony. Aloft, from a sky the colour of the earth, blazed the blighting, blistering sun, which spoils most of India.

It was eleven o'clock, a time when, for three or four hours yet, the sun becomes more accursed with each moment.

The land was desolate, uncultivable. No village was in sight. This was the only part of Kanhala State which could rightfully be called a desert, although it did not run to sand.

Not a figure of man or of animal anywhere appeared. Only, upon two of the horizons, from the west and from the south, a tiny procession might have been seen advancing.

Pitifully small looked the figures composing them, crushed beneath the sun, like ants upon the plain.

The lines which the processions took intersected, so that, with a little natural bending to each other, they were bound to meet.

From the west, with a few mounted attendants, but no luggage, rode Colonel Fendall.

In his contrition at having failed to diagnose the case of Colonel Moor, he was putting unusual thoroughness into this tour of inspection of hospitals in the neglected south-eastern corner of the State. Even here were scattered dispensaries, with perhaps, in charge, a

dispenser and a midwife, upon fifteen rupees apiece, the latter of whom, at least, did infinite good among the ignorant village women.

To do him justice, not often did the Residency Surgeon travel in such discomfort, or even ride abroad at that hour in that season. If he was without luggage, it was that his relay of tents had been sent ahead to await him, with bath and breakfast, a dozen miles further on. He had been specially delayed, by the relief of suffering, from making his morning start that day.

Each procession early recognised that the other contained a European, and headed for it accordingly.

"Whatever can have happened?" said kind-hearted Colonel Fendall to the medical personal assistant who rode beside him and a little behind. "That is a litter, surely. There must have been an accident. Follow me."

A mile of galloping brought them to the sad little procession which was escorting poor Washy, mauled by the tiger which he had shot the night before, towards Europe, towards civilisation, towards medical aid and the comfort of his countrymen.

While Fendall's immediate followers were all mounted, Washy's was an irregular pedestrian procession. Yet it had covered nearly twenty miles that morning.

There was the improvised litter, consisting but of bamboo poles run through a grey native blanket, without any protection save an umbrella from the pitiless heat overhead. It was borne by eight villagers, four at a time, who would have escaped but for the knowledge that Gulab Singh's bullet would have followed them.

Washy's horse, and his orderly's, and another, were with the procession, going at a foot pace, carrying luggage, or sometimes a rider. Raghoba and Gulab Singh had walked beside the rude litter most of the way, seeking to help Washy, and shelter him at least from the sun.

He was keeping up bravely, yet was nigh fainting. There was never much of him at the best of times. Now he looked pathetically small: the natives need

268 The Song of Surrender

not have complained of their burden. Besides bad scratches in the side, his left arm had been mauled out of all human semblance.

Colonel Fendall at once did a piece of *bandobast*, of forethoughtful arranging, such as natives admire in Europeans, but are not often up to themselves. He sent off one of his followers, upon the freshest horse of either company, with a message written in leadpencil, to the nearest hospital along the road to Kanhala, ordering a bullock *damani*, with medical comforts and a qualified assistant, to be sent out to meet Captain Washington. Even thus it would be quite twenty-four hours before Washy could find good help. There was also a message, to be forwarded by wire from the next telegraph office beyond the hospital, asking Dr. Sampson to come out along the south road, if possible, to receive and care for Washy. In both messages the words were used, "amputation case."

In few words Fendall heard from Gulab Singh and Raghoba the story of the accident. After nights of waiting for Wagh, Washy had had him tempted by the carcase of a fresh buffalo, paid for this time by himself. He sat up through half the night, with Gulab Singh, upon the rickety platform or machan which the villagers had grudgingly erected; Raghoba and others were in hiding close by. In the dark midnight Wagh, not really hungry, had approached the dead buffalo, sniffing, to receive the reward of greed in a discharge which shattered his shoulder. Yet he was able to leap at the machan, which came crashing down. Washy skedaddled for a tiny tree, forked and leafless, for it was dead; and Gulab Singh in the opposite direction. The tiger followed Washy up the tree as far as his weight would allow. Washy could not climb beyond the fork, for the branches were mere tinderwood. For a minute or two his left arm hung in the grasp of the man-eater, who tore at it with poisonous claws, and crunched it with teeth the more deadly for being rotten. Then Gulab Singh killed the tiger with a shot through

the heart from a rifle held close up to the panting, striped body.

"This arm will have to come off, and instantly, my dear boy," said Fendall, after he had examined it a second time. "It's green with gangrene ; a few hours of delay will be fatal. The worst of it is, we have no sort of anaesthetic."

He just happened to have with him the necessary instruments for the ghastly business, but no chloroform or ether. None existed, in all probability, within two-score miles in any direction. To have pushed on to the camp that awaited him, or to the place which he had left that morning, would have meant certain comforts, but no anaesthetic ; and Washy would have been dead by that time. One sometimes gets caught like that in India.

It was an ordeal for Fendall as well as for Washy. Not one modern surgeon in ten thousand ever has to amputate under such circumstances. The extreme dexterity, the quickness of eye and brain and hand which the best surgeons possessed who operated upon quivering flesh, can no longer be attained, as it is not often needed.

"The arm must be taken out at the socket, Washy," he continued ; "it will make the cleaner job. Yes, I knew you would consent. You must bear with me, too ; I was never taught what to do in such a contingency. Yell, dear boy, if it gives you the slightest relief ! Not even a damned drop of whisky with which to stupefy you ; though perhaps you are safer without it, in this sun. But I will see how much opium can be collected, among so many natives."

Quite a ball of black, pungent, nasty-looking opium was collected, all the natives who had any gladly giving it up. Washy was directed to chew this slowly ; and it proved of no mean assistance. Fendall deliberately took some minutes in which to swallow some dry food, and to drink from a flask of hot tea, in order to strengthen himself for what was to follow.

270 The Song of Surrender

Several of Washy's servants had begun to weep when they understood the situation ; but were checked by Gulab Singh and by Raghoba. The last, who had some little medical knowledge, would have been invaluable but for the fact that the Residency Surgeon had his own skilled assistant. As it was, serviceable and kind, Raghoba could do nothing more vital than to hold an umbrella steadily over Washy's withered face, and the arm where the flies persistently gathered. Another tried, with less success, to protect Colonel Fendall from the infamous sun, which heated the very instruments which he handled.

There was no shade, no shelter anywhere. In the horrible openness and glare of an Indian noontide, upon the earth which was like rock, Fendall had, with the bare aseptic preparations, to perform that for which every delicate aid is none too much. He did his part with competence, and with the utmost personal kindness.

At the moment when everything was ready, Gulab Singh, much the biggest man there, seated himself firmly upon the ground, and gathered Washy's little frame within his arms.

"Here, little master," he crooned in Gurmukhi ; "here, my Georgie Baba that was, I will hold you with strong arms, as in infancy, against all that must be."

And thus Washy passed through the torture which is almost unthinkable in these days, but which had been endured, for England's sake, by Nelson, by Napier, by Baird, and by thousands of others as brave, though nameless.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FIRE FESTIVAL

RAGHOBHA found himself in serious trouble, soon thereafter, with his cassocked masters. For, at Washy's request, he had accompanied him (and not even in a cassock!) upon the painful journey to Kanhala. To be sure, it had seemed a matter of humanity, of life and death. But only the letter of the law counted with the Ritualists. With the mockery of reasoning minds which they possessed, they argued with him, explaining that they could have forgiven his absorption in *shikar*, even his coming the first twenty miles upon the way with Captain Washington, though to do this he had to leave, without permission, the village of Nimbda, where he was stationed, and his aging wife. What they could not forgive was his having come the remaining eighty odd miles without any obvious need.

In short, they were taking it out of Raghoba as their Bishop loved to take it out of them. "Authority dearly loves authority." Rennie, himself under a cloud, had no part in these doings. Indeed, he had never met Raghoba; so carefully was he kept at arm's length from the real work of his Mission.

Then Raghoba, in a regrettable fit of temper, employed the alien weapon of resignation for the second time within a few months.

His white cassock, which had stifled him, with its fifty-two neat buttons up and down the front, he flung into the cactus hedge. Not even for the sake of the good cloth in it could the thrifty soul force himself to preserve it for household use, so unsympathetic and

272 The Song of Surrender

unhuman, so utterly repulsive, were all his associations with it.

To be accurate, Raghoba did not fling his cassock into the cactus hedge, which has a million minute prickles. He made a gift of it to his tart yet obliging friend Rakhmabai, the groom's wife behind the Residency, who had given him many a good meal in the troubled days before Mrs. Raghoba could arrive from Nimbda to cook for him: Rakhma could cook for a Mahar Christian, though she could not have eaten with him. Even this innocent friendship did not fail to find sharp critics.

Rakhma cut one yard off the bottom of the cassock. Every inch of that yard she put to the uttermost use with the younger children. But in the truncated garment she arrayed her eldest, Ramya, who had not been appointed to gather the balls at the club, because Raghoba had totally forgotten to speak about him to Laura Lowell, though he had promised.

Rakhma would not let Raghoba forget how he had forgotten.

"Various is the madness of the white masters regarding balls," she said. "The other day, O Raghoba Dada, I actually saw a new kind of ball. A young Sahib was running in flannels with a leather ball under his arm which was egg-shaped, and the size of my Ramya's head! Other boys are appointed to gather the balls, not half so well born or intelligent as my Ramya. When are you going to the shameless Kerani——"

But this time Raghoba was in a position to shut her up.

"Abuse not my Missybai if you wish me to ask a favour from her for you."

The name of Rama is about as common in India as that of John in England. Ramya (the vocative and the playful form of it) behind the bungalow was as dear to his own as Prince Ramya in the palace. He was a good deal cleverer; and, what is more, equally well born.

A very droll figure he cut, parading the Residency compound in that truncated cassock ; which caused some compunctions to Jerome, and to another Roman Catholic servant or two.

"Come along with me at once to the Missybai," said Raghoba one day, upon a sudden inspiration. He had renewed respectfully genial relations with Laura, who liked to talk with him by times.

Laura and Radhabai and Ruth laughed consumedly at the little brown image in his cassock.

"Why does he wear that absurd garment, Raghoba Dada ?"

"Because he has none other to wear, Missybai," came the apt answer. "His parents are poor. He has long aspired to wear the red and buff uniform of the page boys at the Club, if Missybai will but condescend to write a *little* chit to the committee, to make it right."

"This is the son of my enemy," Radha raised her voice. "Do not this thing, O Missybai !"

But Laura patted Ramya's head and cheeks. It is even to be feared that she kissed him : which his mother seriously objected to, upon caste grounds ; and which Amar Rao would not have liked upon other grounds.

She exerted herself, writing several notes on the subject. Although she was no longer asked out in station society (which ran upon clogged wheels during these weeks), the Club Committee could hardly have refused Miss Lowell so trifling a favour as a three-rupee appointment for her little *protégé* even if they had wished ; and they did not wish. Before the end of the week Ramya, Bahiru's son, was one of the impish and uniformed page boys in caps, running after the balls rather more nimbly than most, with good prospects ahead because of the friends he made by his bright face. But it is not known that his mother ever abated her hostility to Laura.

Yet though Raghoba had secured a job for Ramya, he was without one for himself.

If nothing else turned up, he said, he would return

274 The Song of Surrender

to his former missionary in Tulsipur, fall at his feet, and beg to be taken on again for old sake's sake.

He was, however, in no danger of unemployment. His bosom was being stirred by larger prospects, opening before him late in life.

Colonel Fendall, who had taken greatly to Raghoba, spoke warmly of him everywhere. He offered him hospital employment at more than his best mission pay. But there was something else which prevented his accepting this.

Washy was invisible, not to be seen. He was immured in Dr. Sampson's zenana, as it was jocosely called, recovering from his grievous hurt, nursed only by Beatrix.

For it would not have been possible, in Anglo-India, for Washy to be left to lie, in such suffering, in his own lonely bungalow, beneath the flapping ceiling cloth. If the Sampsons had not snapped him up, some other kind family would inevitably have done so. The Sampsons were glad of the chance. But it is only justice to them to say that they would have taken him in had they been without their matrimonial hopes, or he without his bit of aristocratic glamour.

Very ill lay Washy, seen only of Beatrix and of her father and mother. Even Gulab Singh was excluded; and naturally Raghoba, who was no recognised attendant.

Yet the Sikh, who had taken such a fancy to the Christian across all barriers of caste and creed, felt that he was safe in telling Raghoba to sit tight until their master, as they both now esteemed Washington, recovered and could be seen.

It was of nothing less than the Government of India Detective Service that Gulab Singh dreamed for his friend Raghoba. He had never risen to that himself; yet he thought that he discovered fitting qualities in the Native Christian. That was the prospect after which Raghoba's soul hankered. To be a secret policeman; to be able to exercise upon real things his un-

doubted qualities of finesse and of firmness ; and to have the prestige of Government employment !

Yet the enemies of England might well have thought that while the representative of the British Government was as Colonel Moor was, while the other assistants were legitimately at a distance, upon duty or pleasure, and while little Washy, a host in himself, was immured, ill, invisible, the Kanhala Residency did indeed lie defenceless and open to any that would attack.

Major Stuart, the Inspector of Imperial Service Troops for that portion of India, was now due in Kanhala. Laura had written to him, saying that, because of her uncle's illness, they could not receive him at the Residency. Amar Rao, General Commanding the Kanhala Army, was going to put him up instead. But Major Stuart was sure to catch on to, and to report to Simla, the parlous state of the denuded Residency.

Two out of Amar Rao's five infantry regiments belonged to the Imperial Service Corps, being carefully kept up to its standards. Curiously enough, his cavalry, his smartest force, was held apart.

The Fire Festival, which always came in the first half of June, just preceding the Monsoon, would synchronise with Major Stuart's visit of inspection.

Modern Hinduism is plastic as well as stiff. The Fire Festival had become a national institution in Kanhala State only within the past decade, since Amar Rao's double palace had been built, with the tremendous marble tower from which he lately showed Laura the kingdom which he desired. It gave him his chief hold upon the people, whose hearts naturally turned away from him to their rightful ruler, the Maharaja. But with the aid of the Brahmin priests whom he despised, somewhat feared, and used, he was able thoroughly to impose upon the people once a year.

The Fire Festival was supposed to show, if not to settle, the destiny of the State for the following twelve months. It always occurred upon a dark night, when Kanhala City vomited its myriads, fearing yet exultant,

276 The Song of Surrender

upon the surrounding plains. Peace or war for the next year was what was then determined. After much hocus pocus the priests, from the top of the tower, waved abroad a gigantic torch, visible afar, the potential flame of war. This was then plunged into a cauldron of water ; and, of course, extinguished. There was to be peace for the following year : what else could there be under our tame rule ? The Maratha multitudes went home, thinking themselves fine fellows, yet glad not to have to fight just yet. During the past eight or nine years there had been no deviation from this precedent.

About this time Laura secured from the Sir J. J. Hospital, as it is called, in Bombay, a nurse for her uncle, skilled in mental cases. It was a placid and superior person, at seven rupees a day, admittedly a lady, and therefore sitting at the chief table.

The nurse did not (Laura would not have allowed her to) interfere with the games upon the floor with Ruth and Radhabai ; nor with certain other habitudes. But she slowly came to regard Laura and her ways with much disapproval.

During the day there had been reviews and processions. Laura, in the Residency carriage, but without trying to take her uncle out with her any longer, had witnessed some of them. Amar Rao was the centre of everything. Major Stuart had warmly commended his troops. The Maharaja, with his minister, kept out of the way on this day, which was the encroaching younger brother's.

In the early evening the Fire Festival came off, but not as usual. As soon as it was quite dark the priests mounted to the tower of Lakshmi Vilas. The tens of thousands gathered outside the city, including Laura, who watched from the corner of her own grounds, saw the jagged, thin line of fire caused by the waving, towards the four quarters of the compass, of the torch, which was then plunged into the cauldron. But this at once, unexpectedly to most, flamed violently upwards for many yards, a light of another degree, a conflagration among

the stars, so high was the tower. For ten minutes it blazed heavenwards, illuminating the twin palaces and all around until it rather suddenly died out.

As a spectacle it was magnificent. But it had shaken and inflamed the hearts of the susceptible multitude, inconceivably ignorant as they were. War, not peace, was then to be the next twelve month's destiny? Some sort of civil turmoil or bloodshed in Kanhala was certainly indicated.

Even Laura, who was never deep, knew that it was a trick ; that the flames must have leaped to heaven like that because some sort of spirit had been substituted for the water in the cauldron. But the bulk of the people did not know. They were moved by some anxiety for their own mud hearths. But they were not unwilling to fight for Maharashtra, if their rulers would give them a lead ; they felt that it was high time.

Great numbers of them, instead of returning quietly to their homes, as usual, poured through the roads of the cantonment. They did no harm to the bungalows as yet. But they shouted, in a way necessarily disturbing to all, and to many discomposing :

"Jai Kali Devi! Jai Maharashtra! Jai Shivaji! Jai Maharaja Tilak! Jai Raja Amar Rao!"

For once the name of their beloved proper ruler was omitted, or nearly so, from these cries, as if even the demented multitude felt that he could have no part in such a tumultuary demonstration.

Up and down the roads of the European camp the excited people streamed, with linked hands, as on the Night of Dupes a few months earlier, but in greater numbers, shouting offensively, yet doing little damage.

Later in the evening, after the European dinner hour, there was a special exhibition of martial dancing and music in the vast amphitheatre of earth which Amar Rao had constructed a few miles outside the city, and where the animal games were yearly held. Such Europeans as had been invited took pains to attend, not only because of the uniqueness of the occasion, but in

278 The Song of Surrender

order to show that they were not frightened by the native demonstrations.

Amar Rao, with Laura, and the few official Europeans, sat, not as at the games in the grand stand at the centre of the huge circle, but down at the edge on one side, in chairs which had been brought for the purpose. The amphitheatre was far from full. The commonalty, native or quasi-European, had not been invited. Here were but the two regiments, nearly twice a thousand men, with which Major Stuart was concerned. They were more than at ease, closely grouped in order to be able to watch the dancing, just behind their Commander and his guests. No cumbrous benches were required for these Maratha soldiers: they preferred to sit upon the tiers of pounded earth, on their heels. They were all armed; nor did any European give a second thought to this fact. Only a segment of the amphitheatre, never intended for night shows, was occupied by the audience, the greater portion of which sat in the darkness.

The dancing, which was wholly by native soldiers, stripped almost naked, may have had remarkable qualities. But it did not appeal to Europeans. After an hour, by about eleven o'clock, the entertainment began to seem decidedly long-drawn.

Upon the two thousand sepoys, however, it was having an impassioning effect which no white man there suspected. Even Laura began to feel a vague patriotic passion, which was all for this country, not that; for India, not England.

This was due a good deal more to the music than to the dancing. The music, both of voice and of instrument, supported the dancing, and gradually supplanted it. It was much more tangible in its appeal.

Yet it was of the rudest, the most elementary kind. There was the stringed *vina*, with several other simple instruments, utterly without message for Europeans. But the standby was the Asiatic drum, commonly called the tom tom.

How these tom toms throb away, through half the night, in half the villages of India ! It is the genius of vivid madness, if you happen to be encamped close by. In that case you can generally send a sepoy to stop it ; but the act is counted for tyranny unto the entire English nation. Your servants will be starting this rub-a-dub-dub, without gamut or progression or meaning, in your own compound towards midnight if they discern signs of weakness in you.

Yet there may come to seem something jolly about it, mingled with good human voices, in a native concert on the floor, a *kirtan* in Western India or a *tamasha* in Kashmir.

The drums of Asia ! There is a potency, a madness in their message to their elect of which we can only judge by the results.

The chief drummer and singer was a blind man, not old, with a face which would not have been nice even if not pitted so deeply with smallpox, and without the sunken, closed eyes. But he seemed rapt, carried away when he occasionally sang out, in a high, pure, melodious voice ; even that face shone at such times.

Seated on the ground of the amphitheatre, just in front of Amar Rao, Miss Lowell, and Major Stuart, he held his oblong drum, twice as long as it was thick, between his knees. He banged both sides of it with his knuckles as he sang, and in between. You wondered that he did not break his fingers, which flew through the air faster than some eyes could follow.

Rub-a-dub-dub ! Rub-a-dub-dub ! Rub-a-dub-dub ! Rub-a-dub-dub ! There was a melody here after all, a progression, a fulness of meaning. Taken with what went before, the meaning was seditious, and only too plain. It called upon you, if you had been born amid the mountains of Western India, to lend a hand in freeing your country by slaying an Englishman. Thus rendered, the appeal seemed highly reasonable ; you were a poltroon if you resisted it. Many a musket, in

280 The Song of Surrender

the darkness behind, was slung forward, till the finger rested on the trigger.

The drums of Asia! We can never judge of their force. While Rabhaji, the blind singer and drummer, was giving something of an artist's expression to the only soul he had, impassioning multitudes, the few Englishmen present, half understanding, tried to be broad-minded, taking it all platonically, and without application to present circumstances.

Listen! How the clear voice soared like a lark, in this evocation of the fair Maratha motherland!

MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra! Maharashtra! Stirring in thy death-like sleep,
Rouse thee from the dull disaster which all true Marathas weep.
Not yet dead is Maharashtra; she shall face her enemies;
Drive into the sea the master who dared thwart her destinies!
And her sons shall throng the faster at the name of Shivaji.
Maharashtra! Maharashtra!—

The song, with its heart-breaking wail, was interrupted by a musket shot.

A sepoy, seated just behind Major Stuart, could bear the tension of the appeal no longer. Leaning over, he had shot a great hole through the Inspector's body.

It was a matter of touch-and-go, that all the sepoys did not follow suit, and wipe out the handful of Europeans. But that would not have suited Amar Rao.

Quicker than thought, he sprang to his feet and was shouting to his soldiers, who knew his voice, to keep their seats, and to preserve loyalty to the British Raj.

Almost with the same motion, he snatched the rifle from the soldier behind him, and shot dead the murderer of Major Stuart.

A scene of disorder ensued, as was to be expected. The murder of a British officer, under such circumstances, made the greatest sensation. But Amar Rao was considered to have behaved extremely well.

Laura, who was afraid of a mouse, shrieked when the

man, who might have been her guest, fell dead upon her skirt. She showed all necessary concern. But her faculties were absorbed in admiration of her hero. Not even when he presided, in the same place, at the animal games of his providing had Amar Rao seemed to her so truly princely great.

What was the phrase?—"carried with him unpremeditated the strength of thunder and the splendour of lightning." That was her lover!

"He has such power!" she was saying to herself. "I cannot think of him as being crushed."

Nothing else of importance happened that night—except that the squat statues of their Majesties, only just put up by the Maharaja, were thickly coated with tar by the roaming citizens, or by somebody, while the sentinels supplied by Amar Rao slept at their posts or professed to have done so. This is a favourite native trick. The statues were spoiled, so that they finally had to be taken down.

Laura was not surprised, or sorry, to hear from Amar Rao that she must hereafter stand ready to flee with him to Quibra at a moment's notice, by day or night.

CHAPTER XXIII

POONA

IT was what used to be called Providential. God (for no ill ends) had undoubtedly delivered Washy into the hands of the Sampsons.

There he had every professional attention, and the tenderest feminine nursing. He knew himself that he was in clover ; and did not press to have a nurse sent for from the Sir J. J. Hospital. In the fever and weakness it was so much easier to fall back upon the downy pillows, freshly shaken up, and to devote himself to the problem which haunted him even in delirium : Who poisoned Colonel Moor ?

Washy kept constantly thinking that he had brought it to the further stage of "How can I convict Amar Rao of the crime ?"—only to wake up and find that the two ends would not yet meet across the gap. He found it pleasant to consult with Beaty's ready spirit and acute intelligence. But not in delirium could he yet give away to her the overwhelming proof of Amar Rao's guilt, for his own mind, namely, the treasonable letter which had been stolen by himself and by Amar Rao within two days, without leaving trace or witness.

The dictated letters to his parents in the North of India which Beaty wrote for him, breathed such gratitude for the kindness shown him in this house that she actually blushed as she wrote. Lady Washington sent separate letters of acknowledgment to Mrs. and to Miss Sampson which became household treasures. She would have come down to be with her son had there seemed the least need. To entertain the titled

wife of a General Commanding would have been the occasion of their lives ; but they aimed at an honour not occasional. After long consultation, with fluttering hearts, Beaty and her mother excused themselves from inviting Lady Washington on the ground (which was quite true) of the paucity of bedrooms in their large bungalow.

Whatever happened, Washy would always love the old folks for their unaffected kindness, and feel good comrades with Beatrix, who had shown unexpected qualities. But for all that, he was not yet hooked. Nothing had been settled matrimonially.

Dr. Sampson sat at noon in the shade of his deep veranda, stretched in the solid long chair which alone it was safe for him to occupy, looking at the India which he loved and which he must some day leave, gazing northward across the burnt expanse of variegated country and of river almost lost in sands, revolving many things in a wonderful memory. "Shall I see my little Beaty well fixed before I go hence and am no more?" was his predominant thought.

"I miss him every hour!" exclaimed Mrs. Sampson, standing over him.

"I suppose you mean Gaspar, mother? I wish you'd say as much for me when I'm away!"

"Ah, but you're not away, Gregory; and much better not at your age."

"I'm not so sure of that, mother. A thorough change of air shakes up my liver, and does me good, even yet."

"What? I hope you're not thinking of gadding about the country on any foolish expedition, in this heat!"

"That's what Washy says," somewhat belatedly remarked Beaty, who had heard her parents from the drawing-room, and now joined them. "He says that he cannot rest until he finds Gaspar."

"Well, how goes it, my girl?" said the doctor, pulling her down to the broad arm of his chair.

284 The Song of Surrender

"Pretty well, dad, though not so well as might be," she answered, with remarkable frankness. "Washy is still much more bent upon this mystery than upon me. I believe that he would propose to me from pure joy and gratitude if I could bring him the solution cut and dried."

"As a sort of dowry, eh? God grant it, child."

The green eyes with which Beatrix looked forth upon her world were clear and fearless. Though not a beauty, a competent girl, who would make a good wife where she set out to do so—could she but arrive there! She was proving a sympathetic companion to Washington; and perhaps her own character was improving in the process.

"Washy is convinced that Gaspar holds the key to the mystery. Where in wide India is he hidden? That is what you must try to find out for me, dad. With Gaspar's testimony, Washy will be able to bring the guilt home to Amar Rao."

"Hush, child, not that name! The very walls have ears, to say nothing of this house belonging to him. Remember that he is our prime patron and protector in the State."

"We need neither patron nor protector any longer; and certainly not if he is stained with this crime. But that is one reason why Washy will not talk with you so freely as with me; you are so prejudiced and peppery!"

Then, for the one hundred and twenty-first time in that house, the probabilities, the pros and cons, were thrashed out regarding what was admitted to have been a great crime.

Mrs. Sampson stood by, listening, wishing that Gaspar might be there to wait at the table that night. Her eyes dazzled as they looked into the glare. They, and her thoughts went right past this second happy marriage to the squalid union at the opening of her life, and to its offspring, Jimmy Twemlow, her Eurasian son of forty-five, in a subordinate service, unmarried, at Sialkote in Upper India.

"I hope all is well with Jimmy. He is of another world; yet he was my first-born. He has not a home. Why will he not let me visit him for the last three years?"

A few days later Dr. Sampson announced that he was starting at once for Calcutta, to be absent a week or more. He was not explicit as to the reason, alleging something like a Medical Congress; but it was imperative.

"Calcutta, with its ghastly climate!" exclaimed Mrs. Sampson. "In no part of India have we ever had to live in such a hole as that. If we had, you would not boast of India as a land to colonise. Don't tell me that *that* place will help your health!"

But when Dr. Sampson announced like that that he was going anywhere, he was apt to go, despite all loving domestic opposition.

He was physically failing in certain respects, although such a fine old Englishman: he sometimes stumbled, and could not see in changing lights. It was not altogether safe for him to travel alone.

"At least you will take a servant, or servants, with you, Gregory?"

"I don't want a servant to have to take care of on the journey," he laughed.

"Over the burning plains, at this season, O Gregory!"

Leaving his admirably conducted hospital in charge of the clever American missionary doctor, Dr. Sampson set forth quite alone.

He would have to travel beyond Poona before he could take the big train which would carry him to Calcutta in two days. As far as Poona, for a day and a night, he was on the same train with Albert Rennie, who was going up for his Second Marathi examination.

The fierce old man was in a first class compartment, and Rennie in a second class. It was just as well; for they would have given each other no pleasure on the

286 The Song of Surrender

journey. Dr. Sampson, who had such a special regard for Mrs. Rennie, was beginning to look askance at her husband. There were ugly reports from the palace. Besides, the self-made doctor was quite enough of a snob to be affected by the knowledge, which had been communicated to him confidentially, that the Bishop had turned his back on Rennie, who would not be allowed to remain in the missionary field much longer.

During these weeks, up to the middle of June, Rennie had been working as he could, doggedly, with aching heart, at his Marathi studies. In his low-pitched bungalow, instead of the cries of a dying child, there were now the hard, dry sobs of a woman.

Deprived of the honorary chaplaincy of Kanhala, he was not allowed, in the little society that he saw, to forget the fact.

Rennie's sermons had been, perhaps, rather strongly secular; yet no more so than is each year more and more desired in the great centres. He had, in English and in Marathi, preached Christianity as "the creed of civilisation." But as his thoughts expanded he came to doubt whether he could even do that, if it meant Christianity as the exclusive creed of civilisation. The noblest creed of civilisation—he would grant that, provided it were still necessary to have a hard-and-fast creed; and he felt intensely the great reforming work which Christianity, or say European civilisation, has to do in modern India. One of the few orthodox enthusiasms to which he could ever work himself up was that for St. Paul as practically the Christianiser, single-handed, of Europe. Even there it was the bigness rather than the character of the achievement, that he cared for. Had he been, say, a Dean, he might have said and felt all this without hurting himself.

An unpleasant controversey had arisen with one Canon Payne, of Bombay, widely known in Western India as Soapy Sam. Even from a distance this cleric, with his silken beard and his crabbety ways, a man so

difficult that he might have been called *difficultueux*, was getting upon Rennie's nerves. Yet he was, though pedantic the only deep student of Marathi in the Ritualist Mission: he was sure to be one of the examiners.

The question was as to whether or not Rennie was justified in charging to the mission the expenses of the visit to Mahableswar, in which he had been weighed and been found wanting. The Bishop, when giving the invitation, had told him that he could do so, but had since forgotten the fact: it was a miserable tangle.

Rennie had to send each month's pay bill to Payne, who was the treasurer of the Mission. In this capacity he was hated even by the other members who held with him ecclesiastically. If it were possible to contest any given claim or allowance, Payne would do so, yielding always as tardily and ungraciously as might be. His letters were marvels of crabbedness and frigidity. Rennie would gaze in wonder at the business signature to them, "Faithfully yours." Was that the form for one missionary, after four years, to use to another? And when all was told, how much faith was there in this man?

The chamelon-like Bishop was now in Poona. From Payne, who was also there, he was rapidly taking a new colouring.

Mrs. Rennie was nicer to her husband during the last days. She kept many things in her heart. She knew that there were troubles ahead. Yet neither doubted that he could pass the examination; nor that, having done so, he would be entitled to a rise in salary which might make it possible for them to live without dishonour. That was as clear as black and white could make it. There were, however, sinister rumours that this would be treated as a special case—always for the glory of God!

"Do not be discouraged, dear!" Lottie said to him on the last evening. "I believe that the Bishop, and Canon Payne, are honest men. They would not do you

288 The Song of Surrender

a wrong . . . How happy we might yet be, with just enough to live on!"

That week in Poona!—hot, and uncomfortable, and unfriended, struggling against a coalition!

Rennie was in a rowdy hotel, the Bond, named after the Commander-in-Chief with whom the Bishop had once kept house. The place was dirty, and the food nothing to speak of. Europeans of a certain grade came there in the evening to play billiards and get drunk.

Rennie, though usually sensitive to such things, did not now mind them. "For my wife's honour!" he was saying to himself. He was content if he could but sleep, after working furiously all day. For he had to bend his energies upon passing, when he saw that things were being made specially hard for him.

The examination was protracted and arduous. Day after day, he never could remember for how many days, he spent most of the daylight at the Bishop's house, where the examiners were gathered against him. Though often utterly done up, he had to try not to appear too much so at the Bishop's table, at late breakfast and at tiffin. It was always a nuisance, when breakfasting with the Bishop anywhere—the elaborate, special little service of prayer which his lordship had to read out before you could sit down, no matter how hungry or hurried you might be.

They had to feed Rennie during the day, like the victims in a torture chamber, in order to keep him a-going (the Bishop had superior cooking). But no one troubled to ask him to tea, at the end of the afternoon, near sunset, when he staggered back to the Bond Hotel, for his tea and dinner close together.

There were wines and pegs at the episcopal lunch table, of which the examiners partook. But Rennie would not touch a drop, for fear of putting himself at a disadvantage during the afternoon.

There were details of colour which he never forgot.

Particularly, the prelatical rich purple of the Bishop's velvet skull cap. This was generally on the episcopal head. But Rennie used also to admire it, as it hung on the hat rack on the front veranda. Then there were the plates, or scales, of shimmering green in a metal belt about the slender waist of the Bishop's still youthful wife.

Mrs. Wedderburn had not been at Mahableshtar when Rennie visited there, but had only just come out from England. She was considered to be a gracious lady. She was not ungracious to Rennie—yet always with that little air, as if certain that he would never do, and that he was troubling them all by pretending, for so long, to be a missionary.

"I have a younger, sweeter wife than *you*; and for her I'll work!" was Rennie's frequent mental ejaculation.

The Bishop was notably less towardly than at Mahableshtar, a month before. Rennie had no chance to speak quietly to him at all.

At the head of the examiners, hostile and odious, was Canon Payne.

The second member of the committee was a Father of sorts, a Mr., afterwards Canon, Rives. He had means, being of a family of publishers: his cousin was the notorious Father Rives, who perverted to Rome. But this Mr. Rives remained within the Church of England, for its undoing.

If not precisely a monk himself, he had a monastery of native monks, a *math* as it was called far and wide, in the wilderness to the south, somewhere Dharwar way. He was not a member of Rennie's mission. His face was worn and thin: his long, lank figure was encased in a black cassock, which swept the floor, and which had conspicuous cords at the waist. The man had a certain social smoothness; and tried to show gallantry to the Bishop's wife. He conversed at the table with some lightness.

These two men chiefly conducted the examination,

290 The Song of Surrender

with which the Bishop had nothing to do. Rennie never had anything to complain of in the manner of Rives towards him.

The third member of the committee was a Reverend Mr. Kirtikar, a native clergyman, of some High Church mission not Rennie's.

This man deserves honour, as an example of what Christianity can do in India. His face was worn like Rives's ; but it had not the same restless, untrustworthy eyes. Instead, a beautiful smile, eyes answering mouth, illuminated at times a somewhat plain brown face. He was slight and small. He, too, wore a black cassock ; but not so ostentatiously as did Rives. He had not a prominent part in the examination, appearing at the Bishop's table only a few times in connection with it.

Mr. Kirtikar was a humble man, in position and in character. He may have had forty rupees a month, or perhaps sixty (£4). Though he shared the dignity of Holy Orders, he looked upon European missionaries as infinitely his superiors, save when a question of right or wrong arose. He was a scholar in his native Marathi. It was for this reason that he had been appointed an examiner, and also because his well-known meekness gave reason to expect that he would prove subservient. But Kirtikar was an honest man. Indeed, the simplicity of his honesty may even suggest that some missionaries may convey to some of their converts qualities which they do not themselves possess.

When Kirtikar was present, Rennie felt that here was a fair-minded friend, who would see justice done if need be. With the European missionaries it was different, though Payne was surly and Rives smooth. Rennie was struggling for all that most men work for. The mere touch of femininity about the house, due to the presence of the Bishop's wife, made him think of a home and a wife of his own, though humbler.

He had to be watchful and alert. Ever after, he had more than a common dislike for the subject of sugar duties. This was because he had had set for him, for

translation into Marathi, nothing less than an entire leader upon this complex topic, from the local paper, sometimes called the *Drunken Gazette*.

Poona, which some decades ago used to be considered the healthiest and most desirable military station in India, has long ceased to be that.

Rennie walked beside the Bund on his last evening in Poona. The long walk in the not really brief Indian twilight is one of the features of Indian life most appreciated at the time, and most fondly recalled in memory. Rennie had always been keen on this ; but only on this day had he escaped early enough. He yearned unspeakably for his wife Lottie, wayward and fading though she was, and though their little child was forever lost. He could not get along without the family life ; a fact which the Ritualists, though it applied to some of themselves, regarded as well-nigh immoral in him.

On this evening Rennie, touched to self-pity, felt the peculiar burden of pathos as well as of melody in the well-known quatrain of the classic Indian Bishop, which he repeated to himself a thousand times :

“ I miss thee when, by Ganga’s stream,
My twilight steps I guide ;
But most beneath the lamp’s pale beam
I miss thee from my side.”

What thousands of aching exiles have felt that, without being able to express it ! Rennie’s own fair wife was not so far off. There might yet be a happy future for them together. His luck might even be better than Reginald Heber’s, who was of another social origin. Compared to his usual free stretches about the Kanhala country, thought Rennie, what sort of evening walks could Heber have had, on the “ putrid sponge ” that Calcutta already was, even a century ago ? To think that the gentle writer was never again to see the wife for whom he yearned—drowned, as he was, at forty-two, in

292 The Song of Surrender

the swimming baths at the studious city of Trichinopoly, which still keeps a faint halo of English letters from the accident!

When all was done that man could do, Rennie cleared out of Poona, hastening back to his wife. The two European examiners refused to give him any idea as to how he had done. No one would say a word of encouragement. The Bishop had been made to see the error of his ways towards Rennie, and now looked at him equivocally.

"If we consider the marks alone," said Canon Payne, rubbing his hands together with the familiar motion, "Mr. Rennie must certainly be allowed to have passed."

"The marks are excellent," said the Reverend Mr. Rives, with an appearance of fairness. "They total to well over eighty per cent."

Rennie had passed with more than credit. At this time he had more Marathi than most of his fellow missionaries ever acquired.

The three examiners sat at a table on the Bishop's veranda, determining their verdict. Mr. Kirtikar kept quiet.

"Nevertheless," continued the Canon, "marks are not the only consideration. We ought also to consider the results upon our sacred work. If Mr. Rennie passes, it will confirm him in the sense of his own superiority. It will also mean an additional drain upon the funds of the mission, and a further grievance in the minds of our missionaries. As Treasurer, I simply cannot consent to pay out more than the two hundred and twenty-five rupees which Mr. Rennie already draws. He has no moral right even to that."

"He had no moral right to take the examination at all," said Mr. Rives, who was an independent worker. "He did it for reasons of filthy lucre. The rise in his pay is all that he cares about—otherwise he would not have pressed for the examination. He had an unfair

advantage in his general knowledge of languages, and in his habits of systematic study."

"I am glad you so completely agree with me, Mr. Rives," said Payne. "The man will never remain in our mission. In another half year, at the furthest, he will have to be shipped home, with that too good-looking wife of his, whom he married for no spiritual reasons. All this, at the best, will be a cruel expense to our contributors. I consider that it would be a sin to tax them any further for the gratification of an adventurer who is practically an unbeliever."

"Ah, is it so bad as that, Canon? Yet I confess that I never could discover (nor any other man I know) just *what* it is that Mr. Rennie believes."

"Mr. Rennie has cheated in coming out here as a missionary at all. That is the result of our authorities not consulting the men on the spot. *We* could have warned them as to the result of allowing a broad churchman in our mission."

"His lordship seems to have been taken advantage of in some of his well-known weaknesses. But if necessary, we must meet Mr. Rennie with his own weapons."

"His lordship has assured me that he will not do such a thing again. But meanwhile, if Mr. Rennie is allowed to pass, he will claim the rise, with an improved standing which would only be an encouragement to iniquity."

"I agree that that would be intolerable, Canon."

"Then I propose that, for exceptional and spiritual reasons, we report Mr. Rennie as not having passed in this Second Marathi Examination."

"I am ready to join in such a report," said Mr. Rives. Doubtless Mr. Kirtikar has no objection?"

"But I have every objection in the world, sir," spoke up the little brown priest. "Never will I join in such a report!"

"What, Mr. Kirtikar," said Canon Payne; "not for the good of the Mission cause?"

"Not for any cause or reason, sir. I am not con-

294 The Song of Surrender

cerned with the internal affairs of the Ritualist Mission, except to wish it well. I am not a missionary, but a native convert, who owes his conversion and his education to the labours of missionaries. But now, such as you have made me, I cannot go against my sense of right. No end can justify such means. Mr. Rennie has passed—I will even say, passed in the face of deliberate efforts to overthrow him. Mr. Rennie has passed ; and he must be reported as having passed.”

“ Really, Kirtikar, you are narrow-minded,” said Rives, who was an intimate. “ You do not consider——”

“ I have considered, and I have heard quite enough, sir,” said Kirtikar, with a decision to which the missionaries were not accustomed. “ I abide by what I have said. Mr. Rennie has passed ; and he ought to be reported as having passed. If he is not so reported I will make a public protest.”

Nothing could shake the brave little man from his attitude. Not many times in his life did he stand up to his superiors and his employers like that. But he came to take a pride in the memory of this occasion.

Once or twice, in later life, he told, with a merry laugh, how he had once stood up to his superiors, and vanquished them.

“ I withstood them to their faces,” he would say, “ and for their souls’ good, even as Timothy once withstood the Apostle ! ”

But it never altered his habitual humility. Rennie felt warmly grateful to him even for what he knew, though they did not meet again. A good man, Kirtikar, of whom one would like to know much more. The fact that such converts can be produced, and even in the first generation (as Raghoba in another grade) must always be remembered when estimating the cause of missions.

Canon Payne’s final advice to the Bishop (which only came out later), in his capacity as senior member of the

Ritualist Mission, as well as of the examining committee, was :

“That Mr. Rennie had passed ; but ought to be treated as not having passed.”

Rennie knew that he had passed. His heart was high within him, for a little, as he thought of the results of all his fightings among books. He left Poona the richer man by one hundred rupees a month, carrying home rather lavish presents for Lottie—though none for Cecily.

He returned to Kanhala late in June, in mild, cloudy weather, quite suggestive of England. The Monsoon, so dreaded in the North of India, is perhaps the pleasantest part of the whole year in Western India.

But Rennie's heart was filled with rage and bitterness as he walked in the twilight, in the almost cool Monsoon weather. For within a week after his return to Kanhala he had received one of Canon Payne's coldest and most malignant effusions. It informed him that he had passed in his Second Marathi Examination ; but that, by the Bishop's decision, no change would be made in his pay and allowances.

Even economically it was a knock-down blow. Apart from their big debt in the city, the Rennies were oppressed with a score of little bills, which there was no chance of paying without the rise in salary.

Lottie, who had shown her husband a smiling face for some days, now wept again daily. “I don't want to go to the palace !” she would cry out.

Rennie could not kick against the pricks. He dared not have it out violently with the Bishop, as he longed to do, because there had been hints that in such an event his license to preach in the diocese would be withdrawn.

O, how badly he needed that poor extra hundred rupees a month, which he had earned by such sweat of brain—for his wife's honour !

It was his by right. The rules of the Mission on the subject stood there as plain as a pikestaff, at the end of

the Annual Report, for all men to read. Even if he were absolutely not wanted in the mission, even if his license were withdrawn, let him at least be paid according to the black and white of the agreement, so long as he was out there.

It was not right. It was not right. It was not bare, ordinary secular justice, such as any man in the street would be disposed to admit, if not to show. But these people were always guided by superior and spiritual considerations, to dishonesty—be damned to them!

Rennie did not ask himself if it had been honest in him to come out in the Ritualist Mission at all; nor, indeed, could his wrong-doing have justified theirs.

But the thought worked within him to madness. The injustice burnt in his heart—or, as the Indian idiom has it, in his stomach.

This matter made a further gap, at once, between Rennie and his fellow missionaries in the station. They resented his sullen resentment at the rise being refused him. They would intensely have resented its being given. He was now marked off, even in Kanhala society, as one who had come to bitterness with his employers, and whose affairs could not continue as they were.

What was the matter with him, that he *could* not get along with the clerical or missionary type? One thing seemed clear to Rennie. It was not for anything that he did that he was blamed, or could be blamed. It was for what he was. It was his *being* that was all wrong. The fault was, as he had often been told, that he was utterly secular-minded.

If you were not that, you could be such a guy, or such a sly one, and it would not matter. Rennie recalled a brother of Hugh Law, a Father Henry Law, an innocent specimen this, who had visited Kanhala the year before. With his black gown fluttering about his heels, Mrs. Moor had said that the very Residency dogs were frightened of him, not knowing what sort of thing that was. Another specimen, by no means innocent, was the most “advanced,” and the best-off, member of

the Ritualist Mission, whom Rennie had encountered here and there. The Potter's Son, as this priest was familiarly called, always inspired in him a feeling of dismay and of abhorrence, with his ferret eyes, his swift movements, and his swishing skirts, which in this case were of silk.

Were they all sincere? What could it possibly matter? The most sincere are the most dangerous, according to the well-known theme. If not sincere, they at least had that colourable imitation of sincerity, sometimes called hypocrisy.

O useful vice, or virtue! If Rennie had been a better hypocrite he could have provided for his wife Lottie. He could not be a hypocrite if he tried. And in truth, to be a hypocrite like Tartuffe requires prodigious watchfulness, effort, and self-control. But Rennie could not be even a lesser hypocrite. It was beyond his powers of mind and of body. That was why, he flatteringly explained to himself, he could not get along in the Ritualist Mission.

He turned to the admirable eulogy of hypocrisy in Molière's *Don Juan* :

"A fashionable vice—and all fashionable vices pass for virtues. The part of a devout man is the best of all parts to play. To-day the hypocrite's profession has wonderful advantages. . . Though it may be discovered, no one dares say anything against it. . . By means of grimaces, you can establish a close alliance with everyone in the faction. Attack one of them, and you have them all upon your back. The best and sincerest are the most easily duped. . . A certain lowering of the head, a mortified sigh, and two rollings of the eyes will make up, in the world, for all the wrong that they can do. . . The true way of doing with impunity all that I wish! I shall make myself a censor of the deeds of others, judge ill of everyone, and only have a good opinion of myself. . . I shall never forgive, but quietly cherish eternal resentments, under pretence of avenging Heaven."

298 The Song of Surrender

But Rennie was glad he could not do it.

The Bishop was a man without a stain upon his character, who would sleep beneath a shining tombstone, whether or not he could have conducted a secular business upon the same principles without being convicted of fraud. But one thing seems certain. Between them all, the Pietists were pushing the Rennies into the arms of sin.

CHAPTER XXIV

GASPAR AGAIN

WHEN Dr. Sampson returned to Kanhala he brought the indubitable Monsoon with him.

Not that it came from his direction, but the opposite. During the last day or two of the journey the Monsoon seemed continually to meet his train, buffeting it, at times threatening to force it off the rails. But it was a mild, beneficent violence. All day and night the little fingers of the rain beat upon the panes of the doctor's reserved compartment, bringing prosperity to the land, keeping India alive, an infinite refreshment and delight!

He did not bring back only the Monsoon. Crouching in a corner of the railway carriage, as a favourite servant is sometimes allowed to do, yet carefully guarded at all the changes, was a small tubby man, who as they approached Kanhala kept his head wrapped about with voluminous folds of cotton, in the way a sick native does.

Putting off, with an expansive wave of the hand, the blue car which awaited the seven o'clock morning train, Dr. Sampson hurried this man, supported as if ill, into a hospital van which had been summoned by wire. He went with him to the hospital where his word was law, shut him up, with plenty of food, in one of the wards reserved for infectious diseases, took pains to see that there was no duplicate key, and carried away the rightful key in his pocket, the entire staff salaaming.

He came home shaken, serene, silent, satisfied. Nay, he was exultant, beaming, triumphant, pugnacious, as in the week after he had temporarily ousted the Diwan Moropant from office.

300 The Song of Surrender

At the breakfast table, some hours later, his account of Calcutta was inconclusive, vague, lacking *vraisemblance*. He would keep smiling; while his eye was keen and happy.

"You seem to be remarkably well pleased with yourself, Gregory," remarked Mrs. Sampson. "Anyhow, thank Heaven you are back again, safe."

"Bah! I am a young man, mother. It is only the rest of you who must grow old!"

Washy, no longer kept to his bedroom, was out at this breakfast, looking far more insignificant than ever, with his left sleeve hanging. Yet even such a loss need not be a tragedy if one's courage is not thwarted. He was still too weak to leave the house.

After breakfast, while other members of the household reposed, the indefatigable patriarch sat out on his north veranda, in the stout long chair, breathing heavily, yet thankful to be there again. The rain still descended copiously. An earthy smell, a delicious fragrance, arose from the soil. Dr. Sampson was looking once more at the India he loved, over the familiar scene, which was no longer parched, but sprouting in witching green, while the river was rising.

To him came softly stepping, in a kimono, his daughter Beatrix.

She sat upon his knee, as in childhood's days. She curled herself sinuously about him, like Vivien with old Merlin in the wood. She pressed her fresh young face, as he loved to have her do, against his worn and grizzled cheek.

"It was for my sake you took that tiring journey to the North, wasn't it?"

"It was."

"You didn't go to Calcutta at all, did you?"

"Sharp girl!"

"You have done what you set out to do?"

"Heaven be praised!"

"What present have you brought your little Beaty?"

"A dowry, I hope."

Her face was buried in the vast white beard for a moment, in a convulsive hug.

"O the darling dad! In what form then?"

"GASPAR!"—in giant rumbling tones.

At that Beatrix jumped from her father's knees and ran about the veranda in zig-zags, uttering little shrieks, like a demented thing.

"Hush! Crazy child, you will disturb your mother, who must not know anything about it as yet. Washy, too, will hear. I should not have spoken that name so loud. The whole point is that Washy shall hear nothing save at your hands, in your way, at your good time, and upon your terms!"

At this there were renewed embraces, well deserved.

"Then Gaspar brings the conclusive testimony which has been lacking? I believe that Washy wants this thing more than anything else in the world—except to have Laura Lowell, whom he never can! But to avenge Colonel Moor, to run down so great a criminal, to win the credit which this will mean to him in the Political Department!"

"Don't you think it will be worth a betrothal?"

"My name isn't Beatrix if I don't make it worth one! So Amar Rao is the criminal? And you have turned against the patron of our family?"

"For your sake I might even have done that, Beaty. But I have no option, since he seems to be guilty."

"Just what is the testimony that Gaspar brings? And where is he? I suppose in the hospital?"

"Yes, safely locked up. Here is the key: I place it in your hands, with my blessing. Make the best use of it: it is the key to your future standing in life. Gaspar is truly not very well. But what do you suppose would be the state of his health a few hours after Amar Rao discovered that he was back here, and as a hostile witness?"

For half an hour they had it out, seated in one chair, as to the exact bearing and value of Gaspar's testimony.

"It may not be enough to hang Amar Rao; and

302 The Song of Surrender

after our long relations of kindness I cannot wish that," was the conclusion. "But it will be enough to make him bolt. He will have to vacate his great position in this State, giving his poor old brother a chance at the long last. Moropant has been more nearly right than I would ever admit. It will be a real revolution in the State. Amar Rao can hardly come to much harm, unless he is killed: he has too many resources, too many different worlds. He has certain properties in sovereign possession, where he cannot be touched; and islands of which we know nothing. If Washy can effect his arrest by surprise it will be a fine enough feather in your caps."

"But how did the clever daddy know that Gaspar was to be found in Sialkote?"

"Something told me; I felt it in my bones—intuition I suppose they call it. Gaspar, having to clear out of Kanhala at short notice, with money in his pocket, was quite as likely as not to try his luck with Jimmy Twemlow, of whom he has heard your mother talk so much."

"Won't she be in a way when she knows that Gaspar is back; and that you have seen Jimmy! How is my brother?"

"Never better in his life!"

It was only with reluctance, or in extreme good nature, that Beatrix admitted this relationship with the Eurasian in Upper India. It was alleged that she and her married sister, though pure in blood themselves, owed to this sideways connection, through some imaginative or sympathetic channel well understood of breeders, the dusky glow which seemed to underlie their brick-red complexions.

"You can't tell mother all about him, so you might as well tell me. I don't believe he's half so lonely as she thinks!"

"He is not—since you have smelt out the fact for yourself, acute young woman!"

"I wasn't brought up in India for nothing. Then Jimmy is not homeless?"

"Not altogether. As you will so soon, I hope, be a married woman, I may even say that he is very comfortable and jolly, for three years past, with a vigorous young housekeeper. That, of course, is why he cannot receive your mother's visits."

"So the station gossip is quite true."

"For once. Jim is a good fellow, with not enough to marry on without pigging it. Though I do not approve of such things as a rule, one must not be harsh or Puritanical, where no social question is involved. Life is larger than all laws."

"I'm astonished at you, daddy!"

"You need not be. Your brother's housekeeper is a pretty girl from the high hills Dalhousie way, fairer than himself, in a garment like a short, loose cassock. Modest and quiet, fond of Jim, running his small establishment cheaper than he could do it himself, and making a home of it withal. Planters and others all over India have such homes, though they are not talked about. I declare, when I saw the little woman seated at the table on Jim's veranda pouring out his tea for him at Chota Hazri, I kissed her as if she had been a daughter-in-law!"

"Naughty old daddy!"

"True I telling, Missybai, and my honoured Doctor Sahib. I not doing this great wickedness. I not poisoning the Colonel Resident Sahib with datura in his mind. I not that sort of man. I rather dying than do such a thing."

"No one thinks that you poisoned Colonel Moor," said Beatrix, "though things could be made to look pretty black for you. I know you, Gaspar! 'I not that sort of man' is what you say before going on a tear, or forgetting to provide a dinner."

"I not doing that sort of thing any more," said Gaspar contritely; and he could look very contrite and appealing indeed with his well-featured, mobile face, his sympathetic great brown eyes.

304 The Song of Surrender

Beaty and her father were visiting him, not in prison, but in the lofty, whitewashed, ventilated infectious ward of the Kanhala Hospital where he was under lock and key.

"How is it that you are in this scrape, and under such grave suspicion?" continued Beaty. "Not your bad luck, as you used to whine, like a native, but one bad habit, as I have told you a few times! If you had not got drunk on the night of the Maharaja's Feast, when you should have been helping others to drink, it is barely possible that this thing would not have happened to Colonel Moor. Anyhow you would not have bolted the next day in that idiotic fashion, drawing all men's thoughts to you. What made you do it?"

"I too much frightened, and not very clear in my mind, after the Feast. Missybai please not being unkind to her mother's poor servant. Amar Rao (very bad man that, though I thinking him a generous Prince!) sending to me, paying me one hundred and fifty rupees Maharaja owing me, telling me: 'You go away one thousand miles or more, where no one catching you for this calamity.'"

"Ah, this sounds promising," said Beatrix, sitting down. "Now tell me the whole story as clearly as you can, beginning with the Feast."

"Mind you do!" Dr. Sampson rumbled. "The Missybai Beaty is your keeper. How long do you think you would live if she should give to our friend the Raja Amar Rao that key which is in her hand?"

"I being hanged up quicker than the butler in Genesis!" replied Gaspar, with a propitiating twinkle and smile; for he was by way of being a scholar. "Why master suggesting such a misfortune? I seeing now how deep the plot Amar Rao making against the great Resident Sahib and against poor little Gaspar, to make us destroy one the other."

"So you say," Dr. Sampson said, with a severe eye. "Now tell us the truth of the matter."

"I not any time a liar, master, with all my faults. I seeing, thinking, looking into this thing very deeply—going pale doing this while away from Kanhala."

He did indeed look pulled down and miserable, as pale as a brown Goanese can be.

"No use considering all the early part of the dinner," he continued, "until meat courses removed, and Maharaja coming in with Moropant. The calamity taking place after that, with the liqueurs.

"I having a very happy time that evening, I confessing. One dozen mixed drinks I swallowing. At the end I not very steady with eyes or legs.

"Colonel Moor Sahib saying to me: 'I not wanting Benedictine; I always taking *crème de menthe*.' At that time he all right, for the last moment of his honoured life. Not swallowing datura before then; speaking kindly to Gaspar.

"I going to dispense-room to ask for *crème de menthe*, which not very easily found. At length the dispense-room butler, a very black man from the South, a Native Christian, not a good Catholic like me, Joseph was his name, putting the *teeny-weeny* glass of green liqueur into my hand, saying: 'Take this carefully to the Colonel Resident Sahib.' I going round the corner of the room, my feet flying up suddenly in the air, as that time when I spilling the tray in the Vicereine's lap—Missybai Beaty remembering. I think I spilling the liqueur and breaking the little glass. I not knowing anything more that night.

"Now listen, Missybai, and kind Doctor Sahib. I giving much thought to this thing, in sleepless nights. I think the poison was first in that glass I taking and breaking. I think God saving me by drunkenness from great calamity of carrying datura poison with my own hand to my former master. After that Joseph not bringing *crème de menthe*, with some delay, to the Resident Sahib, many seeing?"

It was quite true, and well remembered: half the

306 The Song of Surrender

station had seen it, surmising what was the matter with Gaspar.

"Very satisfactory," murmured Beatrix. "And what is the next point from which you begin to remember?"

"Late the next morning, waking on the floor with a very sad headache. Servants around me not knowing I waking, I hearing them talking. They telling how Resident Sahib going datura idiot over night, taking Radhabai. I too much ashamed, and grieving.

"Then some coolie coming, calling me to the Lakshmi Vilas to see Amar Rao's English Padre Sahib. Mr. Walden saying: 'You in great danger of your life, Gaspar. All men knowing you vowing vengeance once on the Resident Sahib, you waiting on him through the evening, he now going datura idiot. But Sir Amar Rao is a merciful man, not thinking you really guilty. For family honour he paying you now the money you claiming from the Maharaja for six months' pay since you dismissed for spilling wine over her Excellency.'

"Then Walden Sahib paying me down one hundred and fifty rupees in cash, no cheque. Saying: 'Only you hide here through the day, not returning to Sampson Sahib's, taking the night train going where you like where no man catch you, more than a thousand miles away.' I much thanking him. I remembering Mrs. Sampson's son in Sialkote. I going there. I telling Twemlow Sahib I in some little trouble with police in Kanhala from drunkenness. He taking me in—very kind gentleman. I sitting there two months with him and his *bibi*, till my own master here coming to find me out and catch me with his great penetration."

The speech was artistically ended by humble salaamings before Dr. Sampson, well pleased. Yet Gaspar did not grovel, as a Hindu would have done. He had spoken with fire and sincerity, still an eloquent and likable little man, though sadly shorn of his beams since Laura first saw him, five months before.

"Seems to hang together pretty well, doesn't it?" Dr. Sampson asked his daughter.

"So I think. Will you tell the same story, Gaspar, to Captain Washington as soon as he is strong enough to come here to see you, perhaps in a day or two?"

"What for I afraid of Chota Resident? I telling the same story to him, to all men, to the Chief Justice Sahib, because truth I telling!"

Nothing could be more conclusive or satisfactory.

"Do you remember, Gaspar, when my mother confiscated the key of your little room for drunkenness, so that you could not get in?"

His face fell, but the eyes said that he remembered.

"Well, so I now hold the key of this room, for your safety, so that you cannot get out until you come to occupy the little room in our compound once more. But tell me something about yourself," she added kindly. "How have you been since leaving us?"

Like a ray of pallid sunlight upon a cloud, a smile illumined the pathetic face.

"I not having any good luck in these two months, only one thing, my wife dying!"

"Gaspar, I am astonished at you!"

"True I telling. Missybai not remembering my wife a very bad woman, running away with another *bootlair* man, having Delhi fever?"

"Something of it all. But do you know, Gaspar, I was always inclined strongly to sympathise with that wife of yours?"

"Oh, missybai, not saying anything so unkind! Anyhow, my wife just now dying of Delhi fever. I coming back to marry Radhabai, from the Residency."

"I thought you came back from a love of us, and of justice. And it was only the love of Radhabai!"

"Missybai liking to joke"—deprecatingly.

"Colonel Moor may have something to say to this. Does Radhabai know that you are here?"

"I not seeing her yet. But from Sialkote I sending her one leetle postcard that I coming."

308 The Song of Surrender

“Oh, foolish man! It will be through the station. Did you sign your name?”

“No, missybai!”—with pride. “Only one big G.”

“Only one big F! Did you swallow the datura that you spilled? Look out that Amar Rao does not raid the hospital and get you!”

CHAPTER XXV

THE MAHARAJA

MOROPANT was not long in scenting out Rennie's recent troubles, social and ecclesiastical. It was not without reason that his countrymen called him Agamya Dada, the man there was no getting at.

There was another execution in the Rennies' poor little bungalow. While a native bailiff was still upon the premises, came a genial note from the Prime Minister.

"May I not send you nine hundred rupees on account as six months' pay?" it asked.

Rennie wrote back, at the bottom of the sheet, the one word: "Send."

He was conquered. He was doing what he had struggled against, feeling it to be dishonourable, if only because so regarded. The fish had been landed by the Compleate Angler.

An hour later a rider on a big horse dashed into Rennie's small compound, causing some excitement. Rennie opened his study door.

A fine-looking, big orderly, more or less, he could not tell of what grade, made him a military salute, and stood at attention. The man had the jolliest laughing eyes. He handed over a small packet.

"From the Diwan Sahib," he said in Marathi, having little English. "I am to see the money counted, and to take a receipt."

He seemed to be laughing in Rennie's face, in mere joy and congratulation, not in any insolence.

"What is your name, my friend?"

310 The Song of Surrender

“Poppu, Sahib.”

There seemed to be something as jolly about the name as the man.

The packet contained sixty sovereigns, neatly packed in an empty stylograph-pen box, which is often a useful receptacle.

Rennie felt that he was dealing with principalities indeed, and that this was the gold of Mammon—very pleasant gold, and much more pleasantly conveyed than through Canon Payne. Knowing in part the ways of the East, he felt that a friend at Court would be useful, and also that Poppu had a right to a share.

“Poppu,” he said, holding up three glittering sovereigns, “this is only fair interest.”

Poppu beamed with joy, yet shook his head.

“No, Sahib,” he said resolutely. “My master would not like it. His pay is enough for me.”

Now the pay in question was probably, at the most, two of those sovereigns per month.

Rennie thought that he had not offered enough. He tried in vain to make Poppu take four, and then five of the sovereigns he had brought. The man departed with nothing, yet showing his extreme good will, as natives sometimes do, by shaking hands with Rennie three times over.

Now it would not have been dishonest for Poppu to take those sovereigns. Yet when Rennie heard, thereafter, that there is no honesty among natives, he recalled Poppu, and wondered at the man's honesty—or at his master's discipline.

The next scene was one of mutism.

The Maharaja sat, in his morning room, in a corner of his favourite wooden bench, with carved sides and back. His short legs, in a dhotar, were tucked up under him, in the only position in which an old-fashioned native is really comfortable. His head drooped.

At an angle from him, three or four feet away, sat Mrs. Rennie, duly appointed English Reader to his

Highness. Her brown eyes, her oval face with the features which might have been cast in Roman gold, were faded with much weeping and worrying. This was not quite the radiant countenance which used to haunt the Maharaja's dreams upon the Bugu's body, like a famous painting showing the Serpent tempting Eve with the conventional body terminating in a delicious infant's head.

On Mrs. Rennie's knee was a red volume, which Moropant had chosen for her to begin her readings with. It was a good English version of the *Contes Drolatiques*, with Dorè's illustrations.

Mrs. Rennie read aloud page after page, in the first story, about the fair Imperia. Her voice was staccato, as colourless as her cheeks. Even if there was no harm in this sort of thing, she thought, her virtue had been less high-flying than that of Imperia's daughter.

It never occurred to her to lift her long-lashed eyes. She was only too glad to be unmolested.

If her voice reached the monarch's ears, the meaning never reached his mind.

She did not look up until a peculiar nasal sound startled her.

Balwant Rao was fast asleep, curled up in the corner of his bench, the sadness of his features relaxed, his mouth beatifically open.

Mrs. Rennie silently laid down the book. Glancing apprehensively in all directions with her still fine eyes, she slipped out of the room, out of the sleeping palace, and to her hired bazar tonga, waiting in the hot glare of the courtyard.

On the next occasion, a few days later, the Maharaja was as wide awake as he was capable of being.

"Why don't you begin reading?" he asked, looking at Mrs. Rennie with some admiration and interest.

Instead of answering, she let the book fall to the floor, covered her face with her hands, and cried as if her heart would break.

312 The Song of Surrender

The kind heart of the Maharaja was instantly moved.

"What is the matter, my child?" he inquired solicitously. "You appear to be unhappy. Has any force or deception been used upon you? Look upon me as your father; and tell me the whole story."

There was really something winsomely kind about the old man at such a moment.

Taking her courage in both hands and putting her best foot forward, as when she addressed the Bishop, but with better results this time, Lottie Rennie took the Maharaja at his word, and told him nearly everything, clearly and coherently.

It all came out—the wearing struggle to count eight annas a rupee, the debts in the city, little Cecily's illness, the hopes held out by the Bishop, the Diwan's temptations, Rennie's efforts to avert the need by winning the extra hundred rupees a month, the outcome of that, the inevitable surrender of self-respect.

"You are the ruler of this land, beloved by all his people," Lottie concluded, with more *savoir faire* than one would have credited her with. "From whom should I ask help, in my utmost trouble, but from the monarch, benevolent and religious?"

Balwant Rao had dropped a tear when he heard of the baby's death. He felt more than one compunction of conscience as he remembered how he had known, or might have known, some of the processes employed to bring the Rennies to their knees.

"Go, my child," he said with much gentleness. "You need not continue these readings. I will consider what can be done for your husband, a worthy man and learned. You shall never be sorry that you reposed this confidence in me. At least I will not fail you as the other one did. You have established a moral claim upon me."

He did not even take a kiss from her, as a European sentimentalist, wincing and relenting and refraining in the portal, might have done without any harm. Here it would have been misunderstood, most of all in the

Maharaja's own mind. It would have seemed to be on the bad side ; and would have spoiled the effect of the generous deed which he intended. For in India, even more than in France, there are only two kinds of women, those whom one respects, and those whom one does not respect.

"I know that my mind is not very strong," said the Maharaja ; "you have often had occasion to tell me so, Ghatgay. But it is quite strong enough for me to know that this thing which you have been doing for my sake—which we have been doing—is not right."

"I am sorry if I have gone too far in my devotion to your Highness."

"I fear you have this time, Moropant ; though I do not the less prize that devotion. But at all times in India a married woman has been respected—at least while unwilling. My father suffered by ignoring that fact."

"It is very true, Highness."

"So I have been turning it over in my mind how we can make atonement to the Rennies. They have their feelings, although of low caste in their own country. Since we have put ourselves in the wrong towards them, we must hasten to put ourselves in the right again. I feel a responsibility towards them."

"Which you think of discharging ?"

"Exactly ; as follows. I am relieved to think that the Rennies do not know of all our deep processes against them. They are not aware that it is to us that they still owe more than two thousand rupees. In any case, you shall write to Mr. Rennie, telling him to keep the nine hundred rupees lately sent him on account."

"I will do as your Highness commands."

"But that is not all. Mr. Rennie is hopelessly entangled with his employers, and with his religious superior, the Lord Sahib whom we know. He will never do good or know happiness in their company again. He is looked upon askance in Kanhala, not

314 The Song of Surrender

altogether, yet in part, because I have betrayed my admiration for his wife."

"To which I encouraged you, Maharaja."

"You say that like a man, Ghatgay. Some other diversion must be found for my mornings, whilst you labour on my behalf. I will try not to turn against you behind your back again. But as to setting Mr. Rennie upon his feet again. I feel that I owe him a permanent provision. You have said that he is a man of learning, knowing our sacred tongue. There is one position in the State, and in my gift, into which he will fit like a finger in a glove. It is the Sanskrit professorship in the Rajram College vacated so suddenly by Dr. Adler."

"Just the place for him—your Highness has an inspiration at times!"

"The salary, four hundred rupees a month, will enable the Rennies to live, and will even seem wealth to them after what they have been drawing. So make the offer to Mr. Rennie, Ghatgay, and put the matter through."

"Mr. Sweets, the Principal, will resent not being consulted; yet I will see that it is done, Maharaja."

There was the most astonishing reversal of tone and of attitude between the ruler and the Minister. Balwant Rao had the upper hand for once, and kept it until he had carried his point. This was due to the fact that morally he was the better worth.

It was hardly once a year that he had the courage and the clearness thus to assert himself. But when he did so Ghatgay yielded implicitly: it was the price at which he kept control of his master during all the other days of the year.

The Maharaja sank back into his usual feeble self, with vacant eye and brain. Moropant saw the change, and resumed the upper hand.

"When are you going to take me to Vilayat, Ghatgay?"

"Where there are many Mrs. Rennies?—and not all of them unwilling? Later, Highness, when the State is

more settled, and when you have grown more sensible.
But courage : you are coming on ! ”

“ What shall we do on our grand tour ? ”

“ The poet has answered :

‘ Sauntered Europe round,
And gathered every vice on Christian ground ;
Saw every court . . . ’ ”

“ I have my own court ”—with haughtiness. “ But
tell me where the fairest and kindest women are to be
found ! ”

CHAPTER XXVI

QUIBRA

“O DEAR! it's raining still. What a shame!”

It was the nurse from the Sir J. J. Hospital, rather lately out from England, who spoke, forgetting her placidity.

“In India we don't say ‘O dear!’ or ‘What a shame!’ when it rains,” remarked Beatrix Sampson, the more nastily because it was so true.

Laura Lowell made haste, after her wont, to put in a mollifying word. But the nurse, in her superior way, sailed, as she had entered, out of the bedroom.

A Monsoon twilight was gathering fast and early. The great drops of rain were descending like arrows from the sky.

The two girls, as they still were for a moment longer, sat frankly upon the matting of the bedroom floor. All around them were big trunks, and piles of costly dresses, with underclothing.

Beaty could not pretend to dress like that. But she knew, from months before, that Laura's dresses, with some taking in, fitted her excellently.

And now all these treasures were being made over to her in free gift. She could hardly credit her good luck. It did not matter that she was about to marry a gentleman, her heart's desire, who did not need, and who might not care, to have her accept such lavish gifts from his own lost love. The dresses could be altered; and men were never observant. Anyhow, these dresses, dozens of them, were too witchingly pretty to be refused. They made a windfall such as would not come again in a lifetime.

Beaty had at length come over for that return visit of a whole day with Laura at the Residency which had been so long discussed. She did not see why she should be done out of this visit, with its probable benefits, even though her mother no longer received Laura.

The day had not passed so jollily as when Laura spent the day with Beaty. The presence of the mooning idiot was like a pall upon the house. Beaty did not like the nurse, who fully reciprocated. There was also, for intangible reasons, a certain sadness of farewell atmosphere.

This was intensified by the excessive presents. The benefits had been beyond all anticipation.

"But you are leaving nothing for yourself, dear!" exclaimed Beatrix, with some real feeling. "This is your wardrobe, and a splendid one, that you are giving away. Anyone would think that you were entering a nunnery, or something of the sort, and had no further need of pretty things."

"I do not think that I shall wear European clothes much more, Beaty dear. Do not let the thought make you sad."

With a little sigh, and a subtle smile, Laura raised her eyes to the image of Krishna stealing butter, crawling across his little shelf, where reposed offerings of food and of flowers.

"They are all for you, Beaty, to use in memory of me," she continued. "Only, if you think that Mrs. Rennie would like some of them, I should like to have you give her the choice of three or four dresses. She makes herself look so sweet upon next to nothing. I have often wanted to be friends with her; but she never would allow it. So good-bye all my pretty things!"

The clothes, as packed with the help of Radha, occupied four boxes of the largest size. Laura summoned two of the indigenous bullock carts, and had the boxes taken off to Beaty's before it was dark.

318 The Song of Surrender

The dinner, an hour or two later, was unfeignedly melancholy. The idiot rapidly getting worse, mowing and making circles in the air, when he was not guarding his eyes, was there with his nurse, besides the two girls.

Then Beaty, after a red-letter day, was sent home through the rain in the great Residency carriage. Laura kissed her tenderly at parting.

“Go on telling us about the Churel, Radha.”

“Go not beneath certain trees in the starlight; this is a warning specially to young men. For there the Churel is apt to drop down upon you from the branches. More fair than any mortal woman she is, with such haunting eyes! But if you let her lure you to sleep in her arms, you will wake up a dead man. She is the ghost of a woman who has died in childbirth. By this sign you may know her. In every part of the body she is perfect. But her feet are pointed backwards, not forwards.”

Ruth gave a squeal of delighted terror.

“But this is a ghost for youths to fear,” said Laura. “Would it keep you from coming into the night with me if I needed you?”

“Ask me not, Missybai. The Churel is a Mahar goblin, who might catch me for all that.”

It was about ten o'clock. The night was dark and stormy. Laura sat, still in a chair, in the room in which she had denuded herself, with Radhabai and Ruth on the floor before her.

There was a little commotion downstairs. A telegram was brought to Laura.

It was from Simla, sent to Washy in reply to his demands. With the intelligence which sometimes marks official bodies, it was addressed to “The officer in charge of the Kanhala Residency.” Laura did not hesitate to open it, since it seemed to be intended for her uncle.

It read: “You are authorised to arrest Raja Amar Rao if you can do so without disturbance.”

Laura was now instantly alert. She knew what it

must be about—the poisoning of her uncle. But it was not in her to believe in Amar Rao's guilt. She was constitutionally incapable of that, being far too deeply in love.

She held the telegram over the flame of the lamp until it was consumed between her fingers.

"I must go to Amar instantly to warn him. I will not take the Residency carriage, to which I have no longer a right."

She sent Ruth off with an order to have Star saddled, *ialdi*, and brought around.

"I go with the Raja Sahib, at once, to Quibra," Laura said to Radhabai. "Will you come with us?"

But all Radha's potential devotion to Amar Rao proved a little thing in this hour.

"Excuse me," she pleaded. "Gaspar has come back to marry me. The Colonel Sahib needs me more than you do. Besides, the Mahar ghosts are abroad; and would be sure to have me on such a night."

Laura dressed herself in her blue habit, and took only her jewels with her.

She went in to take farewell of her uncle, kissing him, uncomprehending, many times. From the threshold she saw him reaching after her; and ran back into his arms once more.

"Take good care of him!" she said to the nurse, who looked on, highly disapproving.

"Are you afraid to ride out with me because of the Churel?" she said to Bahiru her groom, who stood shamefacedly in the doorway.

"I am a Maratha," he answered with a sickly grin. "What should the Churel do to me?"

But it was believed to be the ambition of his life to meet her.

Thus accompanied, Laura rode forth, on Star, into the howling Monsoon night.

Amar Rao's flight with Laura, from Kanhala across the pathless Ghats in the height of the Monsoon, to

320 The Song of Surrender

Quibra Castle over the Arabian Sea, was in itself a romantic adventure. They drove in comfortable carriages where there were roads ; but had often to be on horse-back, or in floods.

This flight put Amar Rao in the wrong with the Government of India, causing his brother's scale to descend. Charles Hozier, in the House of Commons and outside, where Amar Rao was alike something of a hero, spoke resoundingly, from first-hand knowledge, on behalf of the gallant Prince whom Government had tried, and failed to arrest, upon such a preposterous charge. A new Resident had, perforce, to be appointed in Colonel Moor's place. Captain Washington married Beatrix within a few weeks of Laura's flight, and, with a vastly enhanced reputation in his own department, but not much health, took her on a year's leave to England. She was determined not to return without having been presented to her sovereigns. She made him a good wife, as she had always said she would.

At the new year the Maharaja received the G.C.I.E. for which he yearned, while Moropant was free to accept the C.I.E. A little later, when Colonel Fendall left Kanhala, the separate appointment of Residency Surgeon was abolished, Dr. Sampson being given the name and the functions, with an addition of a hundred rupees a month to his previous generous salary. He was even bidden to hope for a C.I.E., if he lived long enough.

Gaspar married Radhabai, re-entering Mrs. Sampson's service. Raghoba was duly hoisted into the Detective Service. But he had to pay a heavy percentage on his first year's salary to Gulab Singh, who had suggested this rise and made it possible.

It was a brilliant sunset when Laura, at Amar Rao's side, laughing, rode Star into the waves of the Arabian Sea until he was swimming. She kissed her fingers to the airy, fantastic battlements, a thousand feet overhead, of Quibra, the Castle of Love.

